The identity trajectories of older academics: workplace affordances and individual subjectivities

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Abstract

The changing landscape of the Higher Education sector impacts on academics’ identity. This ethnographic thesis sets out to understand the identity development of older academics (aged 50 and over) as they engage in their everyday practice and negotiate their participation in such dynamic practice. Whilst recent trends and future projections indicate a growing number of older academics in the workplace, empirical research considering their identity development is scarce, despite a growth of literature conceptualising the workplace as a context in which academics’ identity is constructed and developed.

An ethnographic approach is employed and involved 11 participants from three faculties at a distance learning university. The data was conducted at II phases and included three interviews and at least two observations with each participant. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

This study is drawing on two theoretical frameworks, Wenger’s communities of practice and Billett’s co-participation. First, the thesis explores tensions between the different identities assumed and suggests six identity trajectories that constitute the participation of academics in the landscape of communities of practice. The study suggests that through Wenger’s modes of identification: engagement, imagination and alignment, older academics’ identities come to reflect the changing landscape of their practice in which they participate and exercise their subjectivities, and which constitute their dynamic identity trajectories.

Second, this thesis explores the interconnected relationships between the affordances of the landscape of practice (factors which enable or constrain practice) and individual subjectivities (agency) and how these dynamics shape academics’ identity development and re-construction at work. This study explores agency enactment interrelated with five affordances: academic freedom, recognition, collaborative practice, time and values and motivations.
This study provided valuable theoretical implications for broadening the concept of the COP to consider three new dimensions of modes of identification: unengagement, unalignment and unimagination viewed as a continuum, to capture the complexity and a changing nature of older academics’ identity trajectories.
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Declaration of Authorship

I declare that the work presented within this thesis is my own. Some sections of this thesis have been edited and published or are being prepared for publication. Except where otherwise acknowledged, the work presented is entirely my own. Published works during my PhD are listed below.

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Abbreviations

CoP – Communities of Practice
EdD - Doctor of Education
EAL - English Language Teaching
HE – Higher Education
HEI – Higher Education Institutions
FE – Further Education
RAE - Research Assessment Exercise (currently known as REF)
REF - Research Excellence Framework
The organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised into ten chapters.

Chapter 1 Study context: Older academics' identities, provides an introduction to the study and explain the rationale for conducting this research. It provides the context of the study based on recent trends in ageing population and justifying the need to explore under researched population of older academics. This chapter also considers a brief definition of older academics, followed by a section problematising older academics’ identities embedded in practice, workplace and wider HE practice affordances and academic agency.

Chapter 2 Conceptualising older academic identity, introduces the key concepts and main arguments regarding why this study is relevant and important by situating it within the wider literature. It first conceptualises the notion of identity by exploring personal social and finally sociocultural dimensions of identity. This theoretical discussion provides a frame for how identity will be captured. This is followed by an exploration and contextualisation of the two theoretical frameworks used as a lens of this study. These are Wenger’s communities of practice and Billett’s co-participation. This is followed by focusing and problematising older academics’ identities through exploration of emerging literature concerning three angles. First, an exploration of multiple older academic identity trajectories. Second, an examination of older academic’s engagement, alignment and imagination as elements of their participation and non-participation in a landscape of their practice. Third, a dive into an interrelated relationship between a workplace affordances and agency impacting the development and reconstruction of older academic’s identity trajectories. The literature review concludes by justifying the use of and alignment of two theoretical frameworks and by introducing the research questions of this study.

Chapter 3. Methodology outlines the study design. It first discusses the philosophical underpinnings and positioning of the researcher. This study is situated within a broad qualitative research approach and involves an interpretive paradigm, taking an ethnographic
approach. This is followed by the description of the fieldwork. It introduces the MET University as a study context and provides information on the sampling process with a short note on how the pilot informed the main study design. The following section outlines observations, interviews and document analysis as the methods of data collection. The study was approved by my institutional Human Research Ethics Committee, and the study’s ethical considerations are discussed. Next, the thematic analysis, including its six stages, is detailed. The final section focuses on the credibility and dependability of the study.

Chapter 4 Understanding identity trajectories in the landscape of academic practice, is the first of two findings’ chapters. This first findings chapter focuses on the previous experience and qualifications of the participants. It describes three broad practices of the academics (teaching, research and institutional leadership), following a detailed typology of six identity trajectories. The trajectories are analysed using Wenger’s framework of modes of identification, and extended modes of belonging are explored (unengagement, unalignment and unimagination). This chapter focuses on evidencing the data to address research question 1.

Chapter 5 The interplay of affordances and agency shaping older academic's identities, is the second of two findings chapters. This chapter focuses on the co-participation of affordances and agency, as proposed by Billett. It introduces five affordances and evidences the agency enactment in these. These are: academic freedom, recognition, collaboration, time, values and motivations. The chapter illustrates opportunities, tensions and challenges faced by the academics. This chapter highlights individual and social elements of agency. This chapter focuses on evidencing the data to address research question 2 and 3.

Chapter 6 Discussion, Contribution and Conclusions, is the final chapter. It provides a discussion on the findings. First, it focuses on the practice of older academics discussing the six identity trajectories identified. This is followed by a discussion of affordances and agency. The chapter suggests three ways in how agency is conceptualised in the study (as: adapt, reject, and change). Next, the study implications are outlined for academics, researchers and...
policy makers as well as for older academic professional development. The chapter also discusses study limitations and suggests areas of further research.
1 Study context: Older academics' identities

This chapter reviews recent trends of the ageing academic population in relation to demographics. That section is followed by reasons why academics work beyond their retirement age and finally a definition of “older academics” (which constitute the participants of this research). The final subsection provides a justification and rationale of this study.

1.1 Demographic trends

Drawing on recent literature and future projections, this section discusses contemporary trends of an ageing population in general before moving to the ageing of the academic population in the Higher Education sector (HE). Although this study draws, wherever possible, on research concerning academics in the workplace the literature in this context is limited thus there is a need to examine the more general research of academic identity and older workers. In reaching a definition for a threshold age for an older academic this study considers workforce statistics brackets and an adult developmental theory, discussed in section 1.3. The study defines the age of the older academics as 50 and over.

The UK’s population and the workforce are ageing with the rates of older people still in work projected to increase. A recent decennial report, conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), points out that there are 9.4 million people over the age of 50 in employment (including full-time and part-time), which is equivalent to over 30% of the workforce. The labour market participation for the 50-64 age group has increased by 25% in the last 15 years, particularly among women, and the percentage of workers aged 65 and over has doubled in the last decade. Further evidence suggests that the over-50s account for a significant proportion (42.9%) of the overall proportion of self-employed and part-time workers (CIPD, 2015). The UK’s ageing workforce is perpetuated by several key factors. Firstly, there is an increase in the number of ageing workers due to an overall ageing population. This is mainly caused by decreasing birth numbers compared to the ratio of older
people. In addition, life expectancy has increased. At the turn of the 20th century the average age of death was 65 for males and 70 for females, by 1950 this increased to 70-75 for males and 78-80 for females. Life expectancy is expected to increase to 78-80 for males and 83-85 for females by around 2050 in OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008). Thus, increasing human longevity correlates to how long people generally work.

HE institutions are positioned at the front of the “ageing workforce boom”. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of academics over the age of 65 doubled and their median age surpassed all other occupational groups (Kaskie, 2017). Most recent data from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2023) indicates that in 2021/22, 24% of academic staff were aged 46 – 56, in addition 19% were aged 56 and over. There are several factors influencing the growing number of older academics in the UK. For instance, several researchers discuss longevity and academics wanting to remain in employment beyond the state pension age (Unwin et al., 2015; Universities UK & Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2017). Larkin & Neumann (2012) identified two further trends. The ageing of academics is a phenomenon across most developed OECD countries, with 45-year-olds representing the average age of academics. Additionally, among industry sectors, higher education has one of the oldest populations and is experiencing a continued rise in ageing staff. Their findings were confirmed by another recent study based in the US by Kaskie (2017), suggesting that the HE sector employs a greater proportion of workers over 65, relative to the general labour force, surpassing all other occupational groups. Also, the rapid growth of HE institutions in the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate the general increase in people going to universities has led to an exponential rise in the recruitment of academics. The academics from this period are currently, these in their fifties or older (Larkin and Neumann, 2009; Kaskie, 2017). The decennial UK Universities (2017) report compared statistics from 2006 to 2016 and found a general increase in employed academic staff numbers across all ages in both full-time and part-time. Figure 1-1 below is extracted from the UK Universities report depicting these changes.

Over the ten-year period covered in Figure 1.1, there has been a 40% increase in the 31–35-year-old age group. In fact, this age group accounted for 31.7% of all growth, with 36–40-year-olds accounting for a further 17.2%. The full-time brackets of 61-65 and 66 and over have also seen some increase. On the other hand, the proportion of part-time academic staff aged 61–65 years old group has increased by 44.1%, while those in the 66 and over age group have risen by a staggering 148.5% over ten years. Thus, overall, there are more ageing academics remaining in part-time employment.

1.2 Working beyond state pension age

In general, as a result of the trend of increasingly older workers remaining in employment, Unwin et al. (2015), suggest that the transition to retirement will be increasingly prolonged. They suggest that people will need to continue in paid work well into their late 60s and beyond. Based on Office for National Statistics (ONS) projections in the UK, the ratio of older inactive individuals per worker is set to almost double from around 38% in 2000 to over 70%
by 2050, while in Europe, the ratio will be one to one (ONS, 2006). In a similar vein, a more recent report by ONS (2019) based in the UK, reports an increase in the number of people who are over 65 and still in employment from over 30,000 in 2013 to over 1.5 million by 2018. They further predict that by 2030 there will be a rise to 15.5 million people working beyond the retirement age. Similarly, a recent report by Centre For Ageing Better (2020) reports that the number of people at work aged 65 and over has almost tripled. They estimated an increase of 900,000 more people over 65 in work in 2019. Therefore, older workers might be encouraged to work longer. Interestingly, in the UK, extending working lives by one year could raise real gross domestic product (GDP) by around one per cent, via tax revenues and reduce pension spending (ONS, 2006).

Some countries have abolished a mandatory age for retirement. New Zealand and the US were relatively early adopters of such policies. Other developing countries followed their example introducing similar policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Unwin, et al. 2015). The UK introduced such policies in 2006 under the *Equality Act*, which makes it illegal for employers to suggest retirement to employees who are at retirement age. In the UK, people are now working an average of 7 years longer in retirement age than in the 1970s (ONS, 2006). At this point, it is vital to highlight that the retirement age varies in every country. Currently, in the UK, the State Pension Age (SPA) depends on the year a person was born. Under the current calculator the SPA this year is 66 for women and men (GOV.UK, 2023). For those born after 5 April 1960, there is a phased increase in the SPA to 67, and eventually 68 by 2028 (Age UK, 2023).

There are several studies exploring motivations and factors leading academics to work beyond SPA. For instance, Clayton (2010), Simova (2010) and Cahill, et al. (2018) concluded that among many predictive factors, the two most important reasons for remaining in work were financial necessity and job satisfaction. Also, a literature review focusing on academics’ experiences of retirement, provides further valuable insight (Cahill et al., 2018). All twenty papers in this review indicated older academics' desire to continue working beyond retirement age. In a similar vein, Dorfman (2009) found that in the US, professors remained employed as they enjoyed research. Another survey of 741 tenured senior academics in the US aged 50 and over indicated that enjoyment and fulfilment related to academic work were
influencing factors for 75% of academics who planned to work beyond the age of 70 years. In consequence, the author suggested that academics anticipate continuing working in retirement full-time, part-time or voluntarily (Yakaboski, 2015). Cahill et al. (2018) postulated that older academics continue working because they have fewer of the responsibilities which they dislike - for instance teaching and administration (Winston and Barnes, 2007) or management and research (Williamson et al., 2010). Koopman-Boyden & Macdonald (2003) concluded that the very nature of academic work allows older academics to continue to undertake project-based work or consultancy while moving into full retirement. Finally, Cahill et al., (2018) highlighted that many academics fear losing contact with their students and their colleagues, so they choose to stay in employment for as long as they are able. It is fundamental to acknowledge though, that older does not necessarily mean more experienced, as some older academics are in an early academic career in their 50s (Robertson, 2017). Nevertheless, this study does not aim to measure the level of expertise or experience but explores older academics’ identities at their workplace.

So far, this section has focused on the recent demographic trend of an ageing academic population focused on the UK and the structural and societal factors affecting working beyond SPA. The following sections will discuss and define what is meant by an older academic, by conceptualising the notion of ‘older’ and ‘an academic’.

1.3 Who are older academics and why do their identities matter?

Defining older academic

Overall, there are different perspectives on defining an older worker and there are many factors to consider in this debate. For example: working-age statistical definitions; adult developmental theories; career developmental theories; and more broadly, the ageing versus maturing debate. This study only examines some aspects of these debates: workforce statistic brackets and an adult developmental theory.

Workforce statistics portray a hidden assumption that age is a defining feature of the labour market with a ‘prime working age’ defined as those between the ages of 25 to 54 (Unwin et
The classification used in reports by the OECD specifies three groups: 15-24-year-olds who are recent labour market entrants; 25-54-year-olds who are in “the prime of their working lives”; and 55-64-year-olds, as “those who have passed the peak of their career and are approaching retirement” (Unwin, et. al, 2015, p132). The European Union (EU) uses the same classification (Eurostat, 2018), yet Nordic countries and Australia tend to define older workers from the age of 45 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

A study based in Australia by Larkin & Neumann (2009), takes a different view to that of statistic brackets on the definition of ‘older workers’ and older academics in particular. By reviewing adult development theories (which focuses on the context in which an individual develops) and career development theories (which focus on progression through a series of career stages) they propose 50-55 as a starting point for an older academic. They highlight the distinct nature of the profession itself, in which academics take many years to develop their career and enter full-time positions much later than any other professional group. They suggest 31 years as the typical mean age of an early career academic (based on the time needed to complete PhD, post-doctorate and associate lecturer) compared with 65 as the typical retirement age. They then calculated 35 years of potential career time from their early career academic age to their retirement age. In consequence, the ages of 50-55 with 10 to 15 years of working life before their retirement could be a rough indicator of an ‘older academic’ age. Nevertheless, they highlight that this age bracket does not imply a certain career stage, or life status, but only the chronological working age division of an academic. Findsen (2005, p.12) also tries to unpack the definition of older academic, by citing several authors on the issue and concludes that “young-old” fall into the 55–65 age group, 66-74 as “old” and “old-old” starting at 75. Importantly, his classification includes the post-retirement population, which is commonly missing in statistics. Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that an older academic describes a person who is 50 years and over. Therefore, this research defines an older academic as 50 years and above to reflect the various suggestions and standpoints above.
Defining older *academic*

When attempting to define an academic, we need to consider who are academics and thus what is their practice. The conceptualisation of practice in this study aligns with the notion of practice that provides a holistic way of thinking that integrates what people do in terms of their roles, where they do it, with whom and for what purpose. It links the person with the activity and the context in which the activity occurs (e.g. Schatzki, 2001; Gherardi, 2019). In other words, to understand what we mean by an academic, we ought to look at their academic practice.

The practice of an academic can vary. Traditionally, universities have been an institution of both learning and scholarly inquiry. A study by Deem & Johnson (2000) found that some academics manage to retain a balanced teaching and research portfolio, while others focused on single area. Thus, academics are not one or the other, as often they have contracts which require some involvement in teaching and research (van Winkel et al., 2018). In studies focusing on the European context, the variation in academics’ roles has been described most notably in terms of the extent to which they identify with either being a researcher (Henkel, 2000), a teacher (Van Lankveld et al. 2017), or both researcher and teacher (Henkel, 2000). But it needs to be acknowledged that the separation between research and teaching is contested, and they are considered integrative practices. It also needs to be considered how academics identify with their practice. For example, some academics may identify mostly with research and therefore may not identify with teaching and vice versa.

More recently, considering the diversity of the academic profession, settings and related practice, a wider set of academic practices could include management, administration and leadership responsibilities (Winter, 2009; Gelade, 2013). When considering, the context of this study, academics take on leadership roles while engaging in teaching practice, for example, supervising students’ dissertations. Winter’s (2009) theoretical discussion on academic roles found that some academics became full-time academic managers partaking in leadership responsibilities, thus had little or no time for teaching and research practices. The latter is mainly prevalent amongst older academics who often take on management and leadership roles based on their long experience in academia. Other studies argue that, as academics make management and leadership decisions, the academic role thus inevitably
encompasses leadership and management practice (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Deem and Brehony's (2005) theoretical discussion based in the UK context, highlights a range of roles in academic practice concerning the academic manager and leader roles. These broad roles vary from a Head of the Department that encompasses management and quality control for teaching and research, through Faculty Deans encompassing income maximization and budgetary responsibility for a faculty or a school, to a senior management role such as Pro-Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor who determine the strategic direction of their institutions. Thus, in broad terms, the role of an academic can encompass both management as well as leadership. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in more detail the nuances of the management and leadership debate at this stage, there are sources such as a study by Preston and Price, (2012) which discuss the complexity of an academic and a manager role, which expand upon this. There is also a nuance when it comes to managers or leaders of universities who came to the position via a non-academic route, yet some see themselves as academics and may even become involved in teaching and research (Winter, 2009).

Moving on beyond the complexities of what consists of an academic role, the division of work responsibilities can also be influenced by various factors. For instance, typically during term time, some academics might devote most of their time to teaching, whereas outside of teaching terms, they might focus on research. Also, external factors, such as the introduction of new initiatives, goals, directions, and policies at their institution may increase the likelihood that academics will be involved in administration, managerial or leadership responsibilities. Taking on such functions may be more common for older academics due to their long experience and often senior positions (Oshagbemi, 2000). Moreover, the institution where this research was undertaken also has a unique definition of the academic role. Many academics develop distance learning teaching materials; although they do not directly interact with students developing learning content in collaboration with other academics is considered teaching. More specific details about the university in which this study took place will be given in section 3.5 Entering the field.

The discussion so far has focused on how the complexities of academic roles may change over time as academics progress in their carer, but also throughout the academic year. Moreover, an academic's identity is informed by the roles one holds in the workplace and by
their disciplinary affiliations, both of which can be quite different depending on the institutional context (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Martin, Lord and Warren-Smith, 2020). This argument suggests roles are a way for individuals to interpret who they are, serving as “major identity badges for situating individuals in the organisation” and their disciplinary communities' (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008, p.327). Therefore, who we are as professionals, what our role is and how we engage with a workplace practice is closely related to our identities. Thus, an academic will, over the years they are actively practising, develop a multiplicity of identities. These identities might include that of a teacher, a leader, a researcher, and a manager and will be situated in several overlapping practices including disciplinary, departmental, and institutional practices. Nevertheless, belonging to and developing multiple identities has been found to lead to tensions between these identities. For example, certain identity changes among academics may affect satisfaction levels. A study by Oshagbemi (2000, p.131), suggests that, unlike teaching and research where academics indicated a high level of satisfaction, some of their administrative and managerial obligations were “detested”. This is particularly pertinent in the context of older academics, whose age and experience lead them to be more involved in a managerial activity.

Thus, there is a need to understand the roles and identities older academics have developed and how they are shaped through their engagement with work practices as well as to recognise the tensions created by these multiple and changing identities. Although there are some studies, for example on novice academics (Remmik et al., 2011) and mid-career academics (Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014), older academics have received very little attention. Given the rationale discussed earlier concerning the ageing population, focusing research on older academics’ identity would correct this imbalance of attention.

1.4 The rationale for exploring older academic identity

Although a more detailed account of problematising older academic identities will be given in section 2.4 (Older academics’ identity), the purpose of this brief discussion is to give a sense of emerging literature on older academic identity to justify the rationale and research aims of this study.
Academic identity as a concept appears to have emerged during the 90s in response to a changing educational context experiencing significant reform (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Clegg, 2008). In recognition of the rapidly changing and evolving environment of HE, scholars maintained that it is important to explore the basic relationship between an individual’s sense of self and the educational environment within which individuals carry out their activities to understand academic identity (Di Napoli and Barnett, 2008; Winter, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to focus on the workplace conditions, national political policy and economic contexts in which academics enact their practice.

Literature review studies are particularly useful in gaining a broader picture of how these contexts’ resources or constraints influences the development of academic practices and their identities (Bryson et al., 2006; Gelade, 2013; Bennett, 2017; Lankveld et al., 2017). When considering workplace contexts, Lankveld and colleagues (2017) in their literature review on academic identity, pointed out that on one hand, the work environment enhanced academic identity when the environment was perceived as collegial and supportive. On the other hand, environments characterised by competition, hierarchy, and a lack of trust, were isolating, lacking in career opportunities and inhibited requests for help. Bennett (2017), in a small-scale phenomenological study involving sixteen academics of no stated age, analysed the challenges they experienced when adopting new technologies for teaching. The introduction of new technologies in relation to their teaching practices created a conflicted sense of identity. On one hand, academics wanted to develop their practice through the use new online tools such as YouTube – they thought it important to try them out to understand their potential. Yet, they felt exposed and vulnerable because they saw it as potentially being critiqued by their colleagues. He concluded that the process of changing pedagogical practices was seen as risky and uncertain by some academics, but that it was the drive to develop their identity as innovative and a ‘good teacher’ that helped those academics to overcome these feelings.

Furthermore, the contemporary reforms to HE workplaces created what Winter (2009) describes as an identity schism among academics. Schisms in academic identity surface in situations when practice needs to be aligned with the values and interests of the university but violate traditional academic values. Winter (2009, p.123) identified divisions in academic identity based on conflicting academic identities stemming from their traditional “ideological
rewards, such as the value of discipline scholarship, intellectual curiosity, a community of practice, accountability to peers and professional autonomy” and managerial work ideologies and values systems. Managerialism defined as its associated values of business-like arrangements introduced by corporate customer culture, whereby academics are required to enact academic work by providing regular evidence of the contribution they make against the institutional research targets. As a result, identity schisms of academics have surfaced as they respond to the demands of a more corporate-oriented work environment (Winter, 2009) whilst holding onto their traditional academic values. In simpler terms, the identity schism is between the imposition of managerial culture on the academy, and the clashing values of the academics. For instance, a study by Harley (2002), highlighted an identity schism of academics when the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), currently known as Research Excellence Framework (REF), caused a rift between research academics and teaching academics. On the one hand academics embraced the RAE as a means of securing institutional status by focusing research and publication to a greater extent, while other academics felt the “degree of emphasis” placed on research activities had a divisive “negative impact on the status of teaching” (Harley, 2002, p.196). In simpler terms, introducing evidence of research contributions as an institutional target was felt by some academics to compromise the importance of teaching. Currently, this issue could potentially be addressed by the introduction of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which focuses on measuring teaching outputs such as student employability and satisfaction. At the same time, it may potentially cause even further identity schisms, whereby academics are required to align with other demands of their output driven workplaces. Moreover, Winter (2009), therefore argued for more research into understanding the relationship between the changing HE landscape, and the values and identity of the academics, given that their beliefs and values may not overlap with respect to the roles and obligations of their institutions.

Moreover, academic work has developed over time in a complex way because of variation across national systems, subject disciplines, institutions, and departments as well as in the agency of individual academics. Thus, at the heart of understanding the changes in academic identity due to work and disciplinary context and the wider changing HE contexts, is a question of academic agency. The theorization of agency used in this thesis is understood as a situated process of decision-making and action that impacts the academics’ practice and
identity. Therefore, agency is exercised when one acts intentionally or exercises control over one’s work, work environment, and professional development (Eteläpelto et al., 2014). Thus, when exploring academic identity, there is a need to understand the choices that are made – what is rejected or accepted and what is proactively addressed. A growing body of researchers urge that both the context and the way that individuals make sense of this context should be examined when investigating academic identity. For example, a study by Lam (2010) examined how academics in science disciplines in five UK universities exercised agency in the context of changes within their university brought by wider HE industry. They identified four different orientations used in exercising control over their practice: the ‘traditional’ and the ‘entrepreneurial’, with two hybrid types which amalgamated aspects of both. Another example of the enactment of agency in a response to contextual change was discussed by McNaughton and Billot (2016). The authors suggested that non-alignment of academic values with the demands of workplace practices were variably resolved by individuals impacting on their identity. In both examples, it is crucial to highlight those academics in both studies responded differently to the same context. In other words, each academic’s experience is unique due to ‘the inevitable negotiation between the workplace’s norms and practices and the individuals’ subjectivities” (Billett 2004, p. 114). For this reason, there is a need to consider the agency that older academics employ within their academic contexts when looking at academics’ identity by considering the experiences of individual older academics.

1.5 Chapter conclusions

The evidence suggests that the academic population is ageing, yet there is very little research on the experiences of the older academic. To understand who older academics are, the direction of this study will focus on how the roles assumed by academics shape their identities. In brief, given the earlier discussion, an older academic’s role can involve practices such as teaching, research, and leadership management. Hence, in the context of this study, an academic is defined as a person who engages in research and/or teaching but may also hold administrative, managerial and leadership responsibilities. For example, academics can slip in and out of teaching and research to focus on leadership and management. What is
apparent is that older academics can often determine which part of their role they want to hold on to at later stages of their career, though this may cause conflict if they refuse to engage in tasks they think of as unimportant. It was also discussed that academic roles are a way for individuals to interpret who they are. Thus, in this study, by defining an academic role, I infer academic identities. Furthermore, to better understand academic identities, a broader discussion of identities within the context of their work needs to be taken into consideration. Older academic identities were found to be varied and fluid as well as changing depending on various factors: including proactive, agentic behaviours of academics in altering their jobs to improve their experience of work and workplace practices, as well as contexts of workplaces and wider changing HE landscape. The changing landscape of the HE was discussed as potentially causing conflicts between the values of the institution and the values of an academic. This can create what Winter (2009) called an identity schism, whereby academics struggle to position themselves in new corporate-like universities. In consequence, the study highlighted a need to consider both agency, to understand academic motivations, and context, to explore how these inhibit and or promote the development of older academic identities.

Finally, the population of older academics is an under-researched topic. Thus, this research aims to address this gap with a particular focus on academic identity. Identity is understood as emerging out of the nexus between the nature of practice, what is afforded by the context and the way in which academics respond to these affordances. Above all, the changeable and fluid identities of older academic warrants a prolonged data collection in this study to capture their practice at various stages of their development.
2 Conceptualising older academic identity

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by contextualising the study within previous research on older academics’ identity. The chapter is divided into three major parts. In the first section (2.2) I examine the different research-based perspectives on identity (as being personally or socially developed) which provide a background to understanding the process of academic identity development within a sociocultural orientation of identity. In the next section (2.3), I focus on two sociocultural theories of identity creation: Communities of Practice and co-participation. In the following section (2.4), the concept of older academics’ identity is elaborated by reviewing empirical and theoretical studies which consider the process of identity formation including academics at entry-level and mid-career, within the constraints of the limited literature on older academics. I explore their practice, trajectories and the affordances enabling and constraining the development of their identity as well as the tensions and challenges faced by academics, as discussed in the literature, and their effect on identity development. Finally in the last section (2.5), I outline the research questions and justify theoretical frameworks that will guide the remaining chapters.

2.2 The nature of identity and its construction

As this research is focused on the negotiating of professional identity it is important to locate identity in the context of the research and to identify the various perspectives through which identity, and more specifically older academic identity, can be viewed. Thus, this section introduces the notion of identity and explores how they are understood from a theoretical perspective, to provide the context for the remainder of the thesis.
The term ‘identity’ is broad and contested due to various epistemological traditions that can inform the conceptualisation of the term. Scholars researching the notion of identity agree that discussions of the topic are complicated by the many different ways the term is used and the elusive and complex ways it is defined (Hyland and Tse, 2012; Jenkins, 2014). Furthermore, identity is conceptualised and applied in a range of social sciences including sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, law, linguistics, and history. The heterogeneity and methodological implications of these conceptualisations cannot be fully discussed here. Moreover, the notion of identities has been examined through different lenses, including politics and power; exclusion; oppression and inequality; gender and age. In comparison, the use and conceptualisation of identities in this study is functional and applied entirely within the occupational context of older academics.

The following section will consider two dimensions of identity. First, through the work of Erikson to relate to the individually oriented perspective of identity. Second, the social dimension of identity and thus the work of Mead and Cooley. The final section will consider the sociocultural dimension of identity of Wenger and Billett.

### 2.2.1 Personal and social dimensions of identity

Since the early 18th century there has been a debate regarding the personal (internal) and the social (external) dimensions of identity in the literature. Here the personal dimension focuses on those factors that set us apart as distinct individuals, thus focusing on ‘the self’, whilst the social dimension refers to characteristics that other people attribute to an individual.

Personal dimensions of identity evolved from the conception of the individual as ‘the self’ and is therefore associated with people’s minds. Hence, the term can be understood as self-concept, a view which links identity to humanist notions of individuation, self-actualisation and gaining greater self-awareness of who we are (Hyland and Tse, 2012). One of the seminal works concerned with the notion of identity as a sense felt by an individual within themselves was conducted by Erikson in his collection of essays on the concept of the adolescent identity crisis. Erikson, renowned for his work on psychosocial development, conceptualises identity as “internalised mental models or ideals, located within individuals” (Davey, 2013, P26). From
This perspective identity is more about how individuals recognise themselves than how they are seen by others. In other words, identity is formed through an individual exploring options and in consequence making decisions and committing to these.

Furthermore, even though these views focused on the individuals, they did not negate the role of social contexts in shaping the self. Erikson (1968) referred to a sense of who one is as a person and as a contributor to society, maintaining that a person develops during crises in eight stages of their psychosocial development from infancy through to an adult. The crisis at each stage is psychosocial because it is concerned with finding a new balance between the psychological needs of the individual and their social world and needs of the society at each stage of the development. The seventh stage concerned with generativity and stagnation in middle adulthood (40-65 years old) has relevance in the context of this study. In this stage, through generativity, one develops a sense of being a part of a bigger world and creating a positive change that would benefit other people. By being unable to find a way to feel productive, one becomes stagnant and disconnected with the world and the communities around them. In an older academic context, this can be noticed when academics feel that they make a difference in their workplace or the wider society. By being actively engaged in and developing their practice, academics could be well regarded teachers or a researcher with recognised publications. On the other hand, when academics are unengaged and unproductive in their practice they are likely to feel a lack of enthusiasm. Thus, the generativity and engagement in practice has implications on how academics feel about themselves.

Moreover, scholars have noted that the external power of society on identity formation was not clear in Erikson’s work and that further research was needed to show the role of external factors on identity formation (Penuel and Wertsch, 1995). However, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) claim that Erikson did not discount the external and cultural influences on the development of identity and, whilst he “…recognised that cultural resources, in the form of images and ideologies passed down through generations in history, played a key role throughout development, even in early childhood”, he did not fully account for these (Penuel and Wertsch 1995, p.89). Erikson is often criticized for supporting a limited view of human development. For example, Smith and Rattray (2016) argue Erikson focused excessively on
the period of adolescence, neglecting the development that occurs in adulthood. He conceded that a person's identity could change in adulthood after the adolescent stage but offers a limited conceptualisation. This critique of Erikson’s work is particularly important in this research as the focus of this study is on adults over 50.

Taking the criticisms of Erikson’s work into consideration, his framing of personal identity can still be seen as taking the social dimension into account. Identity does not exist in isolation from society (Penuel and Wertsch, 1995). In contrast, Mead, a sociologist and a behaviourist conceptualised identity as ‘the self’ as separate from other people. Mead (1934) suggested that because a newborn child does not understand who they are, their mind is born blank – a tabula rasa. For example, they do not understand gender, class, ethnicity and so on. However, through socialisation, they acquire these characteristics of identity. Thus, Mead claimed that the formation and modification of identity, depends on interactions with others starting in infancy and these interactions are unpredictable. In Mead’s (1934) view, identity (the self) is a product of social interactions, such as feedback from others, taking the attitude of others, and adjusting oneself to social expectations. Thus, we imagine ourselves in terms of how other people see us. Mead added that significant symbols such as gestures and language enable social exchanges among individuals, stimulating thought and consciousness. Similarly, to Erikson, Mead considers identity development through different stages of one’s life and involves social dimensions. In a similar vein to Mead, Cooley (1902) developed the concept of the “looking glass”, which was a metaphor to conceptualise the construction of the self that depends on the influence of others. In other words, who someone is depends on others’ perceptions, evaluations, and appraisals. Society plays the role of a mirror, a looking glass that reflects who we are. Thus, the recognition and the development of our identity is related to how we imagine society sees and recognises us. Mead and Cooley’s initial understanding of identity sparked a great deal of scholarly interest. When considering older academics, the personal and the social dimensions inform and complement each other. The personal, thus the self of academics may entail an understanding of, for example, their beliefs, or motivations. Whilst the social element implies social structures linked to the professional actions undertaken in performing and developing their roles, for example collaborating on an academic paper, or teaching would involve academics located in a social environment and through the work together developing their understanding of practices
involved. Structure constitutes the world one is embedded in, in specific a social context in which one operates.

2.2.2 Sociocultural dimensions of identity

If we consider that identities are considered as not solely constructed by academics themselves, but in relation with society, such conceptualisation of identity draws on a sociocultural perspective. Indeed, from a sociocultural perspective, the nature of identity does not only relate to the personal dimensions of self, but it also incorporates the various responses to the external world, such as cultures and practices. When considering academics, these could include their disciplinary practices, workplaces, and other external connections.

These ideas parallel with the work of educational theorist Wenger (1998) and his conceptualization of identity construction as associated with Communities of Practice (CoP). The role played by others in the construction of identity in relation to workplace practices was initially explored by Wenger (1998), and again developed in his later work with colleagues (e.g., Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014). Wenger (1989) argues that identity is shaped through participation in social life and as members of a group. Identity is argued to develop as a result of becoming members of a community and through participation as they acquire the core disciplinary skills of that community. In other words, identity construction is not only related to how we imagine society sees us, as interpreted by Cooley and Mead, but how we participate in this society. In fact, Wenger (1998) questions the mistaken dichotomy, which views the person as separate from the social and rather argues for an explanation of identity through the lens of a reciprocal connection between the personal and the social. This integrating position sees identity in the interplay between ‘the social, the cultural, and the historical with a human face’ (Wenger, 1999, p 145). Central to understanding how identity is created in a workplace, Lave and Wenger (1991) focused on the CoP in which the learning activity occurs and therefore is the source of identity.

*There is a profound connection between identity and practice. Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with another and*
thus acknowledge each other as participants. As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person I that context. [...] Learning transforms our identities; it transforms our ability to participate in the world (Wenger, 1998, p227).

In other words, participation in different CoPs throughout our lives provides the social and cultural arena for the evolution of how we think, act, and behave leading to the transformation of our identities. Also, practice is a substantial domain for understanding the nature of who a person is. The discussion of CoP in relation to identity 2.3.1, and practice in an academic context will be returned to in section 2.4.1.

Furthermore, this leads towards the conceptualisation of collective identities, when an individual identifies with a group and builds a sense of group membership. In other words, part of who we are is shaped and nurtured by engagement in different CoPs. Wenger (1998, p.149) consequently posits that “we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify ourselves”. So, the social construction of identities is presented as a reflective and evolving process. From this perspective, the process is always social, involving ourselves and others, and is a matter of forming meaning, involving interaction, (dis)agreement, conversation, and negotiation. As such, identities are 'understood as a process of 'being' and 'becoming'' (Jenkins, 2014, p.19).

The construction or negotiation of identity is referred to by Wenger (1998) as a ‘constant becoming’ and that negotiated during our lives. These ideas resonate with the plight of academics who concern themselves with this ‘constant becoming’ and the ongoing process of the negotiation of professional identity in a fast-changing and fluid higher education environment as mentioned earlier (Whitchurch, 2008; Martin, Lord and Warren-Smith, 2020).

Other scholars working with a sociocultural view, remind us that the process of identity construction is situated within the frame of agency and structure (Billett, 2008; Hodkinson, Biesta and James, 2008). Billett’s (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2011; Billett & Choy, 2013; Billett & Pavlova, 2005; Billett & Woerkom, 2008;) extensive body of scholarship is particularly fruitful in the context of this thesis, given the occupational setting of their studies. Billett and colleagues argue for a balanced view of how collective and individual biography shape
learning and identities. They criticise sociocultural theories for not paying sufficient attention to individual practice and agency. In response, Billett (2001) emphasises the relational interdependence between individual agency and workplace structure by viewing these interdependencies as “co-constructive”. He uses the term “co-participation” (2004, p.190) to refer to the reciprocal interaction between “how the workplace affords access and participation in learning activities that shape identities and how the individual elects to engage with what is afforded to them”.

Billett’s notion of co-participation focuses on understanding the relational interdependence between the social and personal dimensions of the workplace that shape one’s identity. He acknowledges that each of these dimensions play a role in the learning process and shape identity through “... a process that is constituted through interaction between individuals’ social and cognitive experiences” (2002, p. 459). In addition, it views workplace practices as the result of all participatory practices and conceptualises workplace learning as “the product of participation in and engagement with [all] goal-directed activities [in the workplace]” (ibid). Thus, these ideas acknowledge the socio-historic and sociocultural dimensions of both the individual’s ways of knowing and their work practice. Billett acknowledges learning as a process involving “individuals’ ontogenetic development” (2009a, p. 41) or development that implicates everything that makes up one’s being - their unique personal history, sense of self, personalities, values and beliefs, and intentionality.

So far, this brief exploration of the concept of identity interpreted in terms as personal, social, evolving and context-dependent phenomena. Identity refers to those individual attributes that persist over time, and those that are assigned externally, as well as those individual affiliations and commitments that are socially constructed and evolve over time. Identities then are negotiated within the structures of society.

2.2.3 Section conclusions

This overview of individual, social and sociocultural conceptualisation of identity provides a general frame of reference for the context of this study. Some of the relevant historical perspectives have been summarised, which is not intended to diminish other
valuable sources. Rather, the concepts illustrated may allow this study to reconcile the
sociocultural perspective of identity which supports the interest in exploring older academics'
identity. Table 2.1. The constitutive characteristics of the concept of identity summarises the
historical overview introduced in this section.

Table 2.1. The constitutive characteristics of the concept of identity considered in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erikson (1986)</td>
<td>Psychological dimensions of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mead (1934)</td>
<td>Social dimensions of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooley (1902)</td>
<td>Social identity, looking glass self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billett (2001)</td>
<td>Identity co-constructed by agency and workplace practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, specific to the notion of how identity is constructed, the present study draws on a
sociocultural perspective which views identity as culturally and socially constructed. Thus, the
nature of identity does not only relate to the personal dimensions of self, but it also
incorporates the various responses to the external world. Within the sociocultural theories of
identity creation, two theories were found particularly useful when considering identity
construction, because of their focus on the social dimensions, where factors such as
organisation and culture shape the identity construction. These were Wenger’s CoP and
Billett’s co-participation.

Although alternative conceptualisations of identity were explored, they were rejected as not
potentially as fruitful as Wenger’s and Billett’s work. Those considered were framings of
identity from a personal perspective (Erikson, 1968), and/or social dimension (Mead, 1934;
Cooley, 1902). It was concluded that the conceptual frameworks offered by such work did
not connect identity, occupational practice and older academics context as required for the
purposes of developing and addressing the research questions in this thesis. Furthermore,
although other theories within the sociocultural domain, such as job crafting (Wrzesniewski
and Dutton, 2001), or subject-centred socio-cultural approach (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) do offer alternative lines of inquiry to that offered by Wenger and Billett, however they were not adopted here.

To that end, the next section outlines the community of practice and co-participation frameworks in more detail. From the onset, it is vital to point out that both CoP and co-participation frameworks are more frequently used in relation to workplace learning with identity being identified as an umbilical cord between learning and the workplace, whereby identity changes because of the learning occurring in the first place. Learning is viewed in this study as identity negotiation (Billett, Smith and Barker, 2005; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014). Nevertheless, this study considers identity as a primary focus, thus it necessitates some discussion about learning.

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 Communities of Practice

In an earlier section, I provided a brief overview of CoP. The aim of this section is to expand on a CoP framework as it relates to conceptualisation of academic identity used in this study. The concept of the CoP was first introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991), then developed by Wenger (1998) and further developed by Wenger-Trayner et al., (2014). Focusing on the explanation of learning through apprenticeship, Lave and Wenger (1991) grounded their theory on five ethnographic studies: midwives, tailors, naval quartermasters, meat cutters and non-drinking alcoholics. It was Wenger’s subsequent expansion of CoP, based on a study of claims processors, that made a significant contribution in understanding the development of identity.

Subsequent scholars (including Wenger et. al (2014)) have applied Wenger’s ideas to the academic context. For example in James (2007) study of learning trajectories of academics in higher education. But also more broadly, a quantitative study on coach developers by Vinson, Simpson and Cale (2022) on how they can be better understood through a consideration of individual negotiated identity as a process of engagement, imagination and alignment.
In Wenger’s view, participation in different CoPs throughout our lives provides the social arena for the evolution of how we think, act, and behave that leads to the transformation of our identities.

The notion of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) as set out by Lave and Wenger (1991) refers to the changes of a new person joining a CoP alongside old-timers. Although some of the experiences of old timers may be similar to older academics, it is not necessarily the case that old timers are old practitioners (in terms of age). In fact, an old timer may be an older member of the community, but could also be a person with significant experience in the community but of a young age (Lave and Wenger, 1991). By engaging and aligning to such a community, it leads newcomers to their legitimised position within a community. In this view, the newcomer takes on an identity of a legitimate peripheral participant joining a CoP by engaging in a limited number of tasks with limited accountability. A novice learner progresses through a social learning process to become a full member and participant in the practices of a given CoP. Such a trajectory requires novices to master the community’s knowledge, insights into how the CoP operates and its values and relevant skills to move towards full participation. The learning journey of a new person entering a community involves both acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the practices of the CoP and aligning their identity with other members. For example, the progression from being a doctoral student to an academic who, for example, is taking on some teaching responsibilities, or research assistant could be seen as being a newcomer progressively taking on more responsibilities in a given disciplinary community. Another example would be an academic who takes on a leadership role and therefore is a novice in a community of senior-level academics, their trajectory involves an engagement in strategies related to their institution and area of responsibility.

Moreover, a full participant in CoP does not mean an older participant, but one that has developed expertise in the community. Full participation within a CoP is desirable as it provides access to certain knowledge, ways of knowing, and modes of conduct, which are inherent in the practice of a full participant (Wenger, 1999). Thus, participants wanting to achieve centripetal movement within the community negotiate their participation and make
sense of both the practice and their position in it. Nevertheless, there are some studies where newcomers choose not to make this alignment. Hence, they continue to practice in the CoP while not identifying with practitioners, which can lead to the reproduction and transformation of the CoP as a whole (Wenger-Trayner, et al., 2014).

Having explained the basis of CoP and LPP in relation to identity, the following two sections focus on identity in relation to practice, followed by exploring three modes of identification.

2.3.1.1 Identity and practice

Wenger describes a profound connection between identity and practice (Pretorius and Macaulay, 2019). Issues of identity cannot be separated from “issues of practice, community and meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 145) as they are close-knit communities of mutually engaged practitioners who share an interest and engage in the same practice. This concept has paved the way for a rich literature base concerned with a practice-based view of organizations. Practice is understood here as a holistic way of thinking that integrates what people do, where they do it, with whom and for what purpose. It links the person with the activity and the context in which the activity occurs (see Schatzki, 2001; Gherardi, 2019). Seminal work by Schatzki (2001), locates practice within a social and cultural context, whereby practices, roles and memberships have their own ‘histories, traditions, myths, values’, and are important sources of identification (Schatzki, 2001). In a similar vein, Nicolini (2012), adds that utilising terms such as practice has become, in recent years, popular among work and organisational scholars seeking to characterise the relationship between the individual and their social world, in the context of workplaces. Thus, the conceptualisation of academic practice in this study aligns with the work of Beckett and Hager (2002), who argue that practice-based analysis can offer insights into the social, cultural, and contextual factors from which practices of academics are produced. How academics inhabit their practices, roles and memberships expresses their underpinning values and beliefs, or identities (Clarke et al., 2012). Furthermore, participation and non-participation in academic practice develops and redevelop participants’ identities (Wenger, 1998; Billett and Pavlova, 2005).
Academic identities, as will be developed below, derive from academic practice; thus, they are constructed in the process of participating and negotiating experiences in academia. Wenger (1998) highlights four parallels between practice and identity as shown in Figure 1. Given the context of this study; the points related to identity will be elaborated on in turn.

Figure 2-1. Parallels between practice and identity (Source: Wenger, 1998, p. 150, figure 6.1)

Firstly, Wenger (1998) contends that individuals’ engagement in a CoP entails a process of negotiated experience of self which takes place in the convergence of two complementary processes: “It is in this cascading interplay of participation and reification that our experience of life becomes one of identity” (Wenger, 1989, p.151). Participation is both personal and social and so based on mutuality. Participation involves engaging directly in activities, conversations, reflections, and other forms of personal participation in academic practice.

Thus, participation in practice creates relations among the members of a community that constitute “who one is” in the office, who knows what, who is good at what, who is cool, who is funny, who is friendly, who is central, who is peripheral’ (Wenger, 1998, p.150). In other words, daily engagement in practice gives us a certain experience of participation. For instance, academic teaching or working collaboratively on a research project around a certain discipline. Reification, on the other hand, involves both a process and its resulting form. Reification encompasses academics producing artefacts (these could be words, symbols, tools, rules, documents, concepts, theories, and so on) around which the negotiation of meaning is organised. For example, academics produce course content, a policy document, or a theory in their discipline. For Wenger, what makes a CoP different to any social network,
is that the practices of the members of the community are orderly and harmonious organised through the mutual engagement of participants (Jerdborg, 2020).

Secondly, identity is understood as membership since people define themselves by the familiar and the unfamiliar. Membership makes up identity not only through “reified markers of belonging” (for example qualifications such as a doctorate) but, more importantly, through “the forms of competence that it entails”, keeping in mind “what we are but also by what we are not” (Wenger, 1998, p. 152). For example, academics who are teachers engage in teaching practice such as student supervision.

Thirdly, Wenger (1998, p. 154) argues that a person’s identity is “fundamentally temporal” and constantly renegotiated during their life. Consequently, a person’s learning trajectories and hence identity trajectories that might be within or across communities of practice and thus the development and changes to one’s identity is always ongoing (Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022). Wenger, further, explains the dynamics of participation and non-participation, whereby a participant of a community may experience a peripherality or marginality in the context of their trajectories that determine the significance of forms of participation. In other words, an academic who does not engage in teaching practice is still a teacher, yet in a marginal position in relation to that practice. Equally, they can also shed this identity altogether if they want to move away from teaching. That teacher understands the practice and may have been a core member of that community at some point. However, they do not engage in such practice at the current stage, which may change in the future. Consequently, the term trajectory refers to an identity as always shifting. Wenger (1998, p.154) contends, “Identity is not some primordial core of personality that already exist. Nor is it something we acquire at some point ... [such as teeth]... our identity is something we constantly renegotiate during the course of our lives.” Others have also used ‘trajectory’ to explicitly denote change through time (e.g. Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997, ‘career trajectories’). The use of the term, identity-trajectory, does not imply a straightforward undisrupted view of identity. What is emphasized instead is identity development as an ongoing process (Geijsel and Meijers, 2005)—the continuity, the flow, of individual intention and experience across roles rather than within only one role, e.g., an academic researcher, a teacher, or more precisely given their tasks, a networker, or a broker.
Fourthly, identity is considered as the *nexus of multi-membership* due to a person’s needs to coordinate different forms of membership; a person can belong to many communities of practice, and hence they need to reconcile the differences between these communities to sustain their identity across boundaries (Wenger, 1998). As a result, a person defines their identity through negotiation within their *local community* while still belonging to a broader *global community*: an “interplay between the local and the global” (Wenger, 1998, p. 162). For instance, as discussed earlier in the section, an academic can be defined as a teacher, researcher, and leader. In a course production team, an academic can be known as a teacher, whilst in their disciplinary community they are recognised as a researcher.

Furthermore, in Wenger’s subsequent books, the notion of multi-membership was expanded into the metaphor of a *landscape of practice* consisting of a complex system of CoPs and the boundaries between them. Although the metaphor in itself was first introduced in Wenger’s 1998 book, it was in his later texts (Wenger-Trayner *et al.*, 2014) that was developed more fully, to account for the complex relations that people build across the landscape of practice. In other words, participants in a workplace participate in several communities at once. This metaphor is adapted in this study to encompass a landscape of practice of academics, including an HE landscape of practice. For example, an academic can belong to a departmental community of practice within their faculty, but they can also be a member of the global disciplinary community of, for example, psychologists or sociologists. Another example could be a more national community linked to networks and professional associations, for example a member of Association for Learning Technology (ALT). Hence the term a landscape of practice entails the many academic CoPs an academic belongs to and where they inhabit various identities. Belonging to a landscape of practice thus entails academics needing to develop, and keep up to date, their knowledgeability of the broader HE landscape of practice that is relevant to them and develop competence in their own CoPs (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Competence is defined by the socially negotiated curriculum of what knowledge is required to undertake work and act as a legitimate member in a particular CoP (Gherardi *et al.*, 1998). For example, an academic in the field of physics will seek to pursue a doctoral qualification and/or publish in a relevant academic journal to be considered a researcher in their disciplinary community, but at the
same time, they also may need to have at least a basic understanding of wider issues and trends in their wider discipline without which they may not be able to effectively conduct their roles.

Moreover, the impact and power of these CoPs in their landscape of practice is inherently unequal, ever-shifting and beyond the capability of any one individual to master completely (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The tensions created by an individual negotiating and positioning themselves within the landscape of practice will shape which CoPs are most important to them and which elements of their practice they will seek to focus on and develop (Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022). In other words, academics adopt a position in relation to different CoPs across their landscape of practice which inherently implies changes to their identities.

### 2.3.1.2 Modes of identification

The literature reminds us that individuals belong to several communities with different degrees of alignment, imagination, and engagement (Lemke, 2008). Furthermore, three modes of identification are theorized to be most effective when combined (Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022).

Engagement is the most immediate relation to practice and involves engaging in work activities, working collaboratively or alone through participation and reification (defined above as to whom we talk and resources we use and produce). Engagement provides a direct experience of what the community is all about, whether this experience is one of competence or incompetence and whether participants develop an identity of participation or non-participation (Wenger, 1998). For example, Vinson and colleagues (2022) suggest, deciding on going to a particular conference or contributing to a particular disciplinary community, indicates something about to what ideas, people and concepts participants are committed. In the context of older academics, engagement is linked to the relations and interactions between other academics, staff members, students, and colleagues but also engagement with external communities, disciplinary practices and so on.
Alignment on the other hand involves a two-way process of coordinating perspectives, interpretations, actions, and contexts of a participant’s trajectory into the CoP. Alignment becomes a very deep aspect of participants' identities as it concerns power and therefore how they desire their competence to be judged. In consequence, such alignment can amplify but also disempower the sense of what is possible in shaping academics’ identity (Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022). For example, Jerdborg (2020) discusses ways in which academics align their practice with educational demands, or a broader system of demands of universities in which they operate. A recent study by Vinson, Simpson and Cale (2022) considering two cohorts of coach developers, totalling 24 participants, summarised that, despite working in similar roles for the same organisation, the coaches’ identities were highly individualized. The longitudinal study over a period of three years found that consideration of participants' engagement and alignment with a developmental course initiative helped to better understand the (re)negotiation of their identities as they deepened their understanding even though they aligned to the course to different degrees. The aim of the study was to explore the coaches’ predisposition to developmental courses to understand how to shape their experience to enhance their work practice. The results of significant relevance, in the context of this study, highlighted that the coaches’ growing appreciation of the wider landscape of their practice made them aware of the more holistic view of different aspects of their practice and how their identities are dynamic and need ongoing readjustment.

Finally, identification through imagination, as described by Wenger (1998, p.173), involves "creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience". Imagination then relates to the images we formulate of the practice which provides a hint to how we might see ourselves. For example, a study of medical students during their clerkships gained some insight into students’ experiences using audio diaries, wherein students recorded their own reflections (Adema et al., 2019). The study concluded that where was high engagement in their practice, imagination and alignment were less spontaneously mentioned and therefore more difficult to foster. When considering an academic context, an academic might construct an image of their landscape based on speaking to other academics in their disciplinary field, or hearing stories through media sources, related to their practice. This image enables an academic to
position themselves in the landscape of academic practice and thus help them conceptualise how attainable a particular job might be or the differences between similar roles within different organizations.

More discussion on the concepts of engagement, alignment and imagination will be returned to in section 2.4.2 to discuss tensions of identity development when considering older academic’s context.

2.3.1.3 Critique of Communities of practice and a secondary framework

Despite selecting Wenger’s framework as the first theoretical lens to understand older academic’s identities, its shortcomings are worth noting. The literature review of identity in section 2 surmised that the conceptualizations of identity development need to be based on a deeper understanding of the interrelationships between individual and social dimensions. Practices and norms that can either enable or constrain the development of identity (or workplace affordance) are interrelated with individual subjectivities (in other words agency). As a result, the following section will consider a critique of Wenger’s work that consequently justifies the use of a secondary framework in this study focusing on agency and structure.

First, Wenger’s work has been critiqued for giving little attention to individual subjectivities in order to understand the choices individuals make within their practice (Fuller et al., 2005). In Wenger’s work (1998), agency is expressed by participants desire to belong and act competently in a given community. However, it does not elaborate on agency further. Yet, as argued earlier, identity arises out of socially derived yet unique life history or ontogenesis. Critiques then highlight the theory’s lack of appreciation of individual biography and presents the newcomer as tabula rasa - a clean slate without any previous knowledge (Billett & Pavlova, 2005). This perspective recognises that, for instance, academics entering and moving between different communities do not simply start from a position of a novice to be shaped by the practices within that setting (James, 2007).

In a similar vein to focusing on individual biography Jerdborg (2020) notes that, although Wenger mentions paradigmatic trajectories (Wenger, 1998), he has not treated the concept
of different types of trajectories in much detail and how these effect, or are influenced by, the community. In her research of principals in independent schools, Jerdborg identifies and describes several trajectories and illustrates how these trajectories are influenced by the educational community. As a result, a range of trajectories represent paths of agency – an identity that links past and present experiences with future possibilities. The processes of alignment (congruence and incongruence) between the individuals’ biographies, norms and values and the values, practices and norms of the community then are seen as integral to academic identity formation (Foreman & Whetten, 2002).

Furthermore, while Lave and Wenger (1991) do mention issues of power and control, they overlook the significance of wider institutional contexts for participants’ identity development (James, 2007). Their practices, and norms of the communities within which they work could be understood as workplace affordances for identity development. Indeed, a qualitative, interpretive study by Warhurst (2008) exploring novice academics’ experiences of teaching, evidence academics having developed aspects of teacher identity. The development of an identity as an academic was most effective when academics proactively pursued their own learning needs and their abilities to overcome established structures of their workplace and power inequalities. Thus, an individual must understand and be receptive to situational affordances if they want to exercise their agency.

As discussed in section 2.2, this duality between agency and structure in relation to identity within an occupational context has been explored by scholars such as Billett (2004). Billett’s notion of co-participation, describes how access to learning is afforded, on the one hand, and how workers elect to engage with what is afforded to them, on the other, that reflect one’s evolving identity (Billett and Somerville, 2004). Thus, each individual ‘s understanding is a subjective reconstruction or construal of practice that shapes one’s identity (Hodkinson, et al., 2008). In other words, every academic’s identity trajectory will be different depending on how they exercise agency and the structure of their workplaces.

Indeed, each academic’s experience will be unique due to ‘the inevitable negotiation between the workplace’s norms and practices and the individuals’ subjectivities, their histories and identities’ (Billett 2004, p. 114). In consequence, the limitations of Wenger’s
work (Hodkinson, Hodkinson, et al., 2004; Billett and Pavlova, 2005; Unwin et al., 2015) provided theoretical starting points in this thesis to emphasise academics' individual subjectivities interrelated with workplace affordances (structure).

To this end, given the gap in Wenger’s framework in recognising the significance of agency and wider structure on identity development, the following section elaborates on the secondary framework used in this thesis: Billett’s co-participation.

2.3.2 Co-Participation

Billett’s work is primarily concerned with learning, and his work does not explicitly conceptualise identity. He does however make several inferences to identity. For example, in his collaborative paper (Billett and Somerville, 2004), examining how identity and learning are constituted and transformed at work, the authors discuss the engagement of various participants in their respective practices that reflected their evolving identity. Also, in another collaborative study examining vocational teachers (Vähäsantanen and Billett, 2008), the authors recognise identity as formed through participation in work, whereby identity negotiations occur, in response to requirements to change one’s practices. The study explored the college environment as the context for the vocational teachers’ professional identity negotiations. The study looked at ways in which teachers adopted distinct personal strategies to engage with change and to understand how identities were negotiated through an agentic process. In simpler terms, engagement in practice has the potential to shape and change one’s identity. When considering Billett’s conceptualisation of identity in an older academic context, an academic may for example decide to step into a leadership role for a short period of six months as an acting up role to cover a colleagues’ absence. The structure, which in this example is an HR policy, enables an opportunity to experience a leadership role, whilst the academic decides whether to take on the role. Through their engagement in their new role, they may decide that they want to pursue leadership practice. Thus, engagement in practice develops and changes academic identity.

Having exemplified a way identity is inferred to in Billett’s work, the following sections elaborate on the framework of co-participation and the interrelationship of workplace
affordances and subjectivities. In the three subsections that follow, I will first explore (2.3.2.1) workplace affordances as enablers and/or inhibitors of participants' participation in practice, then move on to a section (2.3.2.2) on co-participation, that describes the interrelationship between workplace affordances on the one hand, and how workers elect to engage with what is afforded to them, on the other that reflects identity development. The section will conclude (2.3.2.3) on individual subjectivities and personal epistemologies.

2.3.2.1 Workplace affordances

Workplaces are viewed as locations for many participatory activities and opportunities. Focusing on the situated nature of the practice, Eraut (2009) states that workplaces vary in the affordances available, as a result of local goals, norms and role boundaries. In Billett’s (2000) study, he applies the critical incidents technique to examine the efficacy of guided learning activities in five workplaces (including textiles, health and distribution) over six months. Billett found that the type of learning that ensued in the context of everyday workplace activities was linked to the structure of the work environment and the affordances of the workplace. He highlighted that the participants of his study developed different aspects of their identity given their perceptions of, and engagement with, the affordances available. In his further theoretical paper, Billett (2001. p.211) referred to “affordances” as opportunities and incentives to learn. The structural and cultural dimensions of the workplace are seen then as shaping the pattern of affordances that impact one’s identity. Affordances are culturally and historically constructed from workplace values, norms and practices, and therefore vary both within and between organisations (Billett, Barker, and Hernon-Tinning 2004).

Billett’s notion of affordances is not a new term, affordances can be traced back to an ecological psychologist J James Gibson in the mid-sixties in his ecological theory of perception. In Gibson’s work “The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception” (1979) he argued that the environment was not a collection of causes that pushed an animal around, but consist of action possibilities which Billett might refer to as affordances. Gibson (1979) argues that, in making their way in the world, animals regulate their behaviour with respect to these possibilities. Gibson (1982) introduced the concept of affordances to explain how
inherent action possibilities in the environment or objects are available to an individual, independent of their ability to perceive them. Thus, affordances are opportunities for action that exist in the environment and are not dependent on the animal’s mind. Therefore affordances, according to Gibson, exist even though they are not perceived. Affordances are defined concerning the person’s action capabilities. For instance, for a human being, a floor affords walking, and a chair affords sitting providing a person can walk and is tall enough to sit. In an academic context, this could be a physical building, or an online tool used by academics when working remotely, providing they have the skills to use them and access. Furthermore, affordances do not change as the intentions or needs of a person change. Thus, the existence of an affordance is independent of the person’s ability to perceive, while the ability to perceive may well depend on the experiences and cultural socialisation of the person. Also, “affordances do not cause behaviour but may constrain or control it” (Gibson, 1982, p. 411). Furthermore, “an affordance is not bestowed upon an object because an observer needs it or perceives it, the object offers what it does because it is what it is.” (Gibson, 1979, p. 139). Therefore, a person’s perception of an affordance is as important as the affordance itself. Thus, values and meanings can be directly perceived, and these perceptions in turn make an individual’s actions. Given that these perceptions occur in the context of one’s surroundings, Gibson argues to incorporate an organism’s environment in studies of affordances. For people, that means the personal, social, and cultural aspects that surround them.

As a result, the concept of affordances as applied to people, should be able to accommodate differences within the human way of life and accommodate the rich variety of socio-cultural practices. Similarly, section 2.2 positioned identity as developed in a sociocultural context. In the same vein, Billett’s conceptualisation of affordance considers the wider socio-cultural context affecting affordances. In his theoretical paper exploring affordances, he contends, “affordances are [...] shaped by workplace hierarchies, group affiliations, personal relations, workplace cliques, and cultural practices (Billett, 2001, p. 67). In consequence, workplace affordances may vary and can be available or not available to members of a given practice, which implies what is possible or not in terms of one’s identity development. When considering older academics, affordances may include academics’ workplaces, their colleagues, rules, and expectations of their practices, but also their wider landscape of
practice, for instance, their discipline CoPs. Also, there might be affordances that are not available specifically for older academics. For example, a review of the literature on 'successful ageing' and the performance of older workers by Koopman-Boyden and Macdonald (2003). The study suggests that research on training for older academics has negative perceptions of their competence and may be due, not to age, but to insufficient training and the poor nature of the content in learning programme design to match the variation in older academics’ skill and aptitude. Therefore, a workplace that does not afford learning opportunities for older academics' specific development related to their role, could potentially inhibit the development of their leadership identity (Koopman-Boyden and Macdonald, 2003). A more detailed section on affordances in an academic context will be returned to in section 2.4.3.

To conclude this section, the literature identifies workplace affordances as opportunities but also impediments to develop within one’s workplace and across their landscape of practice, which in turn shape one’s identity. It is for these reasons that the concept of affordances conceptualised by Billett (2001, 2004c) fits well with the context of this study, as academic contexts encompass a variety of learning affordances within sociocultural contexts of their landscape of practice, including their disciplinary context and workplace.

The following section discusses the relationship between workplace affordances and individual engagement.

2.3.2.2 Workplace affordances and individual engagement (co-participation)

Affordances are not mere possibilities for action (as Gibson had stated) but can also have the potential to invite behaviour (Chemero, 2009) and more recently Withagen et al. (2012), defines affordances as “relations between the abilities of animals and the features of the environment.” (Chemero, 2009, p. 181), whereby affordances invite behaviour. In an academic context, an affordance that invites behaviour could be a developmental course available for academics, a study leave, or a funding opportunity. Thus, affordances foster an opportunity for participation, yet it is up to the individual to decide if they utilise and engage with that opportunity. Thus, it is for the academic for instance, to decide if they engage in
non-mandatory developmental courses and what sort of engagement they might have, similarly if they choose to work in collaboration and/or individually on research.

Billett’s places the notion of affordances within the workplace context, interrelated with individuals’ subjectivities (2001). Billett’s (2001) talks about a relational interdependence, between the affordances, constituted of contexts such as workplaces, but also individuals’ broader historical and cultural contexts. To conceptualise this, Fuller and Unwin (2004) set out a term called learning territory. This notion posits that every individual has access to a unique set of learning opportunities. When considering academic context, it is based on these learning territories and the way in which an academic may perceive and engage with opportunities and barriers available in their practice, including what an academic may construe as relevant to their needs.

By identifying factors that shape how one develops in the workplace, Billett conceptualises the dual basis “of workplaces afford learning opportunities and how individuals elect to engage in work activities and with the guidance provided by the workplace” (Billett, 2001, p.1). Thus, a relational interdependency between a personal experience (individual’s knowledge) and what is afforded by the work practice shapes identities through work. depicts this dual basis of co-participation at work.
Earlier in section 2.3.1.1, I discussed that academics participate simultaneously in a range of social practices across their landscape of practice which, as a result, creates multiple identities. In consequence, academics are unlikely to split their time, effort and attention uniformly among these practices and identities, instead, they prioritise what is most important to them to engage with that leads to the development of some identities and not others. Thus, participants may be engaged in one practice and unengaged in another. These dispositions to particular practices are based on personal epistemologies, such as personal learning experiences, perceptions, memories, values and norms of the participant (Hodkinson, Evans, et al., 2004). Individuals, therefore, will actively determine how particular workplace affordances are interpreted and engaged with. Billett’s work inspired by Valsiner (1998, 2000) refers to this occurrence as “relatedness between the norms and values of the social practice and individuals’ values and preferences” (Billett, 2004a, p. 201). In these ways, individuals’ values and interests are understood as their subjectivities, that is part of their agency (Billett, 2004a), which are a product of their life histories or ontogenies and that have
an impact on an individual’s identity development and renegotiation (Billett and Somerville, 2004).

In simpler terms, an example of co-participation in relation to personal values may involve an academic that prioritises the development of their teaching identity over the development of their research identity. Some universities offer teaching-only academic positions. Individual congruence with the norms and practices of the workplace would enable the development of this academic identity. Thus, the academic determines how a particular affordance (the affordance of teaching only contracts) was engaged with and further developed their teaching identity.

Moving on now to consider individual choice in workplace affordances, this line of argument directs us to the other theme in Billett’s framework: subjectivity, defined as the “personally premised construction and projection of conceptions, procedures and sense of self as directed by individuals’ agency and intentionality” (Billett, 2010, p. 4). Thus, an individual subjectivity is conceptualised as making decisions on whether or not one wants to engage with the opportunities available (affordances). Hence, it is both the perception and the capacity to act, that is manifested through agency enactment. To this end, the following section needs to turn to the individual agency in identity development.

2.3.2.3 Individual subjectivities and agency

In an earlier section (2.3.1.3), I suggested that one of the criticisms of the notion of CoP was the lack of focus on the individual's agency. Therefore, agency is central when exploring identity development, however, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the nature and various interpretations of the term. Thus, this discussion is not a sociological analysis of the roots of agency, or the debate of structure versus agency. In the context of this study, agency is commonly understood as more than individual free will. It can be understood as the way individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances (affordances) (Billett, 2004c). Furthermore, scholars working from a sociocultural perspective highlight the importance of focusing on individuals’ beliefs and actions which are seen as a reflection of
personal agency (Billett, 2004a; Hodkinson, Evans, et al., 2004) achieved in and through engagement with particular contexts. In addition, the earlier section on co-participation (2.3.2.2), indicated that apart from workplace affordances, an employee’s personal epistemologies and life histories contribute to the shaping and development of the learning environment. Thus, the agency is socially situated, which aligns with the sociocultural orientation of this study. The conceptualisation of agency used here is one which is interdependent with surrounding practices. Indeed, scholars such as Billett, conceptualises structure and agency as interdependent and focuses on a balance of workplace affordances and individual subjectivities (Billett, 2001).

The work of British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1979) has become preeminent in theoretical discussions of such relationships. Giddens contends that agency and structure presuppose one another and are interdependent. Agency according to Giddens is a continuous flow of conduct and intentionality. In consequence, therefore it reflects a temporal concept bound to context (Giddens, 1979). Giddens’ structuration theory explores the interrelationship between agency and structure and has been an inspiration for Billett’s framework of co-participation. Similarly, in this study, I align the view of agency as a situated in practice process of decision-making and action that impacts one’s practice and identity. Therefore, agency as being exercised when one acts intentionally, exercises control and affects ones professional identity, work environment, and professional development (Billett and Pavlova, 2005; Eteläpelto et al., 2014). Moreover, it is at this point that Billett’s framework adds to Wenger’s framework, whereby he adds the element of agency of a participant in a community that can challenge by acting agentically in a practice, a component that was missing in Wenger’s homogeneous CoPs.

Influenced by Valsiner’s (1998) cultural psychological perspective, Billett et al. (2005) suggests that “the heart of this interdependency is individuals’ agency and intentionality, premised upon their identities and subjectivities” (p. 222). In Billett’s study (2008) data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with 12 workers equally distributed amongst four occupations (a gym, a restaurant, an IT support department in a university, and a fire station). The research aimed to understand the affordances of the workplaces and the processes of engagement with these affordances, which is closely aligned with the context of this study.
The results of the study reinforced the significant role of individual agency in the learning process and consequent identity formation and concluded that, even in the same workplace, workers engaged in practices differently because of their own intentionality and sense of agency. Furthermore, the study highlighted that the practices of the workplace changed over time because of co-construction. Thus, the agentic action of workers changed the affordance altogether. This study was echoed by another by Billett (2006), looking at hairdressers’ vocational practices and how these were shaped by the situational factors of the workplace (norms, local practices, and values). This again concluded that the participants’ ways of working were shaped by their individual life histories and prior experiences. Their previous ways of working thus also changed the current practices in their new workplace settings. These studies align with studies in an academic context. For example McNaughton and Billot (2016), explored identity shifts in academics, related to institutional change through a technological initiative that was an introduction of large-class videoconferencing. Academics’ engagement with the new changes were determined by their expressed range of positive, neutral, and negative individual agentic reactions that did not achieve the aim of the institution but did lead to further academic self-development. In other words, some academics decided to engage with the changes, while others did not. Thus they exercised agency within the affordance offered, at the same time the affordance of the initiative changed as a result of a mixed response from the academics, leading to the change of the affordance in the first place. The enactment of agency in this context, is viewed as a dual process of individual change of the academic (including their identity development) along with the remaking of workplace practices (Billett & Somerville, 2004).

Billett (2004a) also reminds us that one’s previous experience is likely to incite the agentic actions in how one responds to affordances. In other words, previous experiences, prior knowledge, understandings, and skills are uniquely socially shaped through engagement. This engagement occurs in different social practices throughout life and constructs dispositions contextualised in one’s agency (Billett, 2004, 2006). When considering academic context, previous experiences can help in maintaining their academic identity, for example when using their previous teaching and classroom skills in a different subject area in a different type of institution, thus replicating what they used to do in a new context (Cahill et al., 2018). In consequence, their agency in deciding on, for example, utilising educational tools to facilitate
the sessions will be determined by what they used to do in another institution, providing the same affordances are available in their current workplace. Given the age of the participants in this study, the academics will have a wealth of previous experience and knowledge that would have an impact on how and what they engage with across their landscape of practice. A literature review of academics’ experiences of retirement by Cahill et al (2018) reminds us that academic CoPs tend to value age and experience. Another interpretative study of retiring academics, suggest that academics focusing on research practice, through their previous experience and expertise can have access to better resources in their current practice. This increases their productivity and impact (Boulton-Lewis and Buys, 2014). Also, education and professional qualifications of the academics may have an impact on what the academics can see as possible within their workplaces. A study by Eddy and Rao, (2009) focusing on leadership development in the USA, reminds us that there is no conclusive evidence on whether professional doctorate qualifications improves performance in the field of practice, nevertheless, the authors note that holding such a degree proves useful in negotiating access to senior level positions and taking on a specific recognised identity in their CoP. In a similar vein, a theoretical discussion by Robinson and McMillan, (2006) suggests that the lack of doctorate qualifications can have an impact on academics’ role trajectories. Thus, both previous experience and qualifications have an impact on the choices academics make in their workplaces but also what affordances are available to them given those prior experiences and qualifications.

All in all, Billett’s body of research confirms the importance of individual agency and intentionality and therefore the importance of investigating the identities of academics within the context of their landscape of practice from the perspectives of the professionals themselves. However, he also shows how such experiences cannot be understood separately from the context (affordances) in which they occur. That was referred to as co-participation between workplace affordances (structure) and individual subjectivity (agency), one’s learning biography and values and norms. The section also pointed out that during the co-participation, both the individual and their affordances change. This interrelated process has an impact on individuals’ identity.
2.3.3 Section conclusions

Theories centred on CoPs and on co-participation theories complement each other and identify key elements relevant to the context of this study. Namely, practice, affordances, identity, and agency. These elements are thus the pillars of this study and will be referred to throughout the thesis. This study aligns with individuals negotiating identity that is closely intertwined with learning and participation within workplace practices (Billett and Somerville, 2004; Vähäsantanen and Billett, 2008). It also aligns with the construction of identities associated with engagement in societal and cultural practices (Wenger, 1998).

In the section that follows, I will explore these elements in more detail in relation to the academic context in general and specifically in relation to older academic identity development.

2.4 Older academics’ identity

There are various theoretical approaches to academic identity. The previous sections considered personal and social dimensions. In the same vein some scholars, focusing on academic identity, recognise both individual and broader structural aspects of identity (Henkel, 2005; Clegg, 2008); whereas others focus on its discursive and narrative nature. For example, Moore et al (2017) found that academics reconstruct their identities through pragmatically responding and adapting to profound changes in their working environments. However, other scholars agree that identity is constructed in a social context and that, rather than being stable and fixed, it is shifting and dynamic (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Henkel (2000, p. 251) viewed academic identity as both distinctively ‘individual and embedded in the communities of primary importance to them’, whereas Clegg (2008, p. 329) argued that identity is a ‘multiple and shifting term [which] exists alongside other aspects of how people understand their personhood and ways of being in the world, is not a fixed property, but part of the lived complexity of a person’s project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being part of the academic’. Both examples, without being explicit, refer to the
notion of practice as a way of contextualising an individual in the world. Indeed, previously, section 2.2 positioned the study within sociocultural theories of identity creation. Given the two frameworks (CoPs and co-participation) used as a lens in this study, the following review discusses elements of older academic identities that are grounded in those frameworks’ broader assumptions of identity creation. These are:

- The tension between multiple academic identities in a landscape of practice;
- Older academic’s trajectories and modes of identification;
- Co-participation and identity development

2.4.1 The tension between multiple academic identities in a landscape of practice

Tight (2004, p.409) observes that in the HE context, there is ‘not a single CoP but, rather, a series of somewhat overlapping CoPs’. In the context of this study, an older academic can belong to several CoPs as they have been pursuing their teaching, research, and leadership profession over time. Furthermore, scholars like Becher and Trowler (2001) and Henkel (2000), remind us that academic practice is grounded in different disciplinary and professional communities which they referred to as tribes. In consequence, these communities could include their departments, faculties, subject specialist CoP (for example business, law, psychology, etc.), teaching or research specific CoPs (for example Higher Education Academy, specific research method communities, specific teaching method communities etc.). In consequence, this study borrows the term ‘landscape of practice’ (2.3.1), as it will be adopted to refer to the many CoPs an academic may inhabit.

The practice of academics is ever-changing and mostly socially legitimated, where academics interpret themselves as a certain individual within various contexts (Winter, 2009). As pointed out earlier, an academic can belong to a community within their own department and develop an identity through that community, whilst they can also develop another identity within their disciplinary community and these identities form their academic identity. In consequence, academics’ participation in a landscape of practice results in multiple identities. Section 1.3 earlier highlighted that traditional academic practice encompasses teaching and research, whilst contemporary academic practice evolved to encompass
elements of management, administration, and leadership responsibilities (Winter, 2009).

Other scholars such as Becher and Trowler (2001) and Henkel (2000), remind us that within an academic profession, disciplines and related landscape of practice, a wider set of academic identities could include: professional, managerial, leadership, enterprise, administration, service, and academic development identities. This amalgamation of identities shows the complex nature of academic practice. Indeed, academic practice 'brings into play the underlying, sometimes implicit, purpose(s) that motivate us to be academics and through which it is possible to integrate an array of multifaceted duties, responsibilities, skills and knowledge into a coherent sense of academic identity' (McAlpine and Ackerlind, 2010, p.3). An academic then develops their identity to encompass many sub-identities across a landscape of practice. Such sub-identities may cause tensions and may play out differently in relation to different practices.

Nevertheless, when discussing Wenger’s conceptualisation of the landscape of practice in section 2.3.1.1, I argued that developing several identities is inherently unequal, ever-shifting, and beyond the capability of any one individual to master completely. This situation might result in tensions between those identities. The development of all these identities at the same time may not always be possible, and some may be more pronounced than others, or they may clash altogether. Winter (2009) suggests that contradictions and conflicts can arise from these competing identities as academics enact their multifaceted practice. This leads academics to experience competing priorities in their identities (Bolden, Petrov and Gosling, 2009). This is exemplified in a paper exploring ideological conceptions of management in UK HE by Deem & Johnson (2000). The authors highlight that some academics manage to retain a balanced teaching and research portfolio, whilst others focus on one aspect of practice or the other. These suggestions are similar to those reported by Boyd and Smith (2016) discussed earlier. Their results indicated that, when academics become full-time manager academics or take on leadership responsibilities, they are often left with little or no time for teaching and/or research. Furthermore, some authors have argued that academics most strongly identify with their discipline, rather than their workplace (Henkel, 2005). Becher and Trowler (2001) and Henkel (2000) found that academics described themselves primarily as individual scholars, which was expressed by a prolonged engagement with their subject, discipline, or professional practice. According to Henkel, the discipline of an academic fosters
a physical structure and a set of accredited and recognised functions, allowing them to consolidate and refine their identities around their disciplines (Henkel, 2010). These different roles within an academic practice indicate different identities being developed which can generate tensions. An academic must, therefore, decide how to position themselves within their landscape of practice. In other words, academics ought to determine which departments and disciplines are most important to them at that time and what elements of their practice they will seek to develop. Such decisions represent the heart of how Wenger (1998) positioned identity development through engagement, imagination, and alignment. To this end, the following section will focus on these three dimensions.

2.4.2 Older academic’s trajectories and modes of identification

Having established that academic identity trajectories encompass an amalgamation of different identities that are in constant flux and ever evolving, the following section explores modes of identification within the context of older academics. As outlined in section 2.3.1.2 Wenger offers three modes of identification to account for participation and non-participation in practice. These are engagement, alignment, and imagination.

Several studies have applied Wenger’s framework of modes of identification to various contexts, such as coach developers (Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022), and novice principals. However, within an academic context, there are relatively few empirical studies using Wenger’s modes of identification. Instead, studies within an academic context (Villabona and Villalón, 2023) draw from Wenger’s LPP more broadly without being focused to a great depth on modes of identification.

Nevertheless, to the best knowledge of the researcher, only one study explored ‘old timers’ (James, 2007). The following section explores how these studies could be relevant in the older academic context by highlighting how participation and non-participation through engagement, alignment, and imagination impact on participants’ identity trajectories. Firstly, by exploring how engagement of different trajectories of the participants within the same practice shape, enable, or restrict the way working practice is experienced. Secondly, by an understanding of the wider landscape of practice, participants may address issues related to
alignment within their identity and the wider context. Thirdly, by understanding the participants’ imagination of their professional futures, it affects the way in which they align their practice.

In her study of novice principals Jerdborg (2020) discussed three ways in which participants engage in their practice. Jerdborg (2020) discussed that some principals engaged within their landscape of practice, shaping their CoP, and therefore changing the practice of their school. In consequence, they negotiated their participation in practice and competence. In contrast, other principals participated with non-engaged alignment and consequently experienced an overwhelming amount of work duties, thus resulting in non-participation. In part, they participated in an uncommitted way, following the script rather than reconstructing educational practice. Furthermore, principals who participated with non-aligned engagement, experienced struggle, and conflicts, in consequence, an ambivalent participation. These results highlight how one’s participation in practice can vary, therefore be unique and at the same time, their participation and non-participation reflect their negotiation of their identity trajectories. In other words, for example, non-engagement still can be aligned, or an ambivalent participation can be of nonaligned engagement. If we interpret this study’s findings in an older academic context, older academic identity trajectories would also differ depending on their engagement in practice. For example, an academic that focuses their practice on leadership engages and aligns their participation around such practice. The same academic may be disengaged in teaching practice and thus participate in a bare minimum of what is required of them; thus, they are unengaged yet aligned as they participate in the practice of teaching as recognised by their CoP. Experiences then associated with different trajectories shape, enable, or restrict the way working practice is experienced and enacted. For instance, ambivalent participation may have a negative impact on one’s practice (Jerdborg, 2020). Also, if applying Vinson et al. (2022) study of coach developers discussed earlier to the context of older academics, by focusing on engagement and alignment of academics’ practice to the different CoPs would highlight their reasons for participation and non-participation in their practice and potential conflicts. For instance, Winter (2009)’s identity schism introduced in section 1.4, discussed a perceived need to align all academics to the demands of the university’s managerialism. Such managerialism is conceptualised as a disempowering process where academics feel they have
less say in the decisions in the university and are subject to various managerial processes such as targets. In consequence, academics may choose to align to these changes and therefore have limited opportunity to influence decisions of the university and may feel disengaged. Thus, understanding the values and practice of varied types of academic trajectories may overcome any issue of identity schism when considering a leadership identity of an academic.

Several studies discussed earlier (Warhurst, 2008; Jerdborg, 2020; Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022) highlighted how participants’ prior educational experiences, current imagined professional futures and the relevance they were able to attach to some of their practice, all affected the way in which they aligned with their practice. Similarly, a study of 41 academics working beyond normal retirement age from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand by Boulton-Lewis and Buys (2014), considered older academics in relation to their research identity. The study argued that most academics imagine themselves to be active researchers beyond their retirement age, as opposed to remaining engaged in teaching. Academics considered their practice beyond retirement age as the freedom to choose their own work and thus they seem to prefer to engage in research activities.

Moreover, studies applying Wenger’s framework of modes of identification were relatively vague in terms of the role of imagination in their identity development. Yet, understanding the imagination mode of belonging of academics would shed a light on a significant aspect shaping their identity. This study hopes to address the gap.

The modes then of belonging of imagination, engagement and alignment illuminate complexities of various trajectories that could be explored in relation to older academics’ identities and as such, this study adopts the term identity trajectories. Thus, there is a need to explore how academics align and engage with practice within different identity trajectories as well as how they imagine themselves and the broader landscape of practice. The studies above highlighted tensions resulting in viewing identities through those modes, as well as presenting a better understanding of individual identity trajectories. Having explored issues of older academics’ identity trajectories through notions of their modes of imagination, alignment, and engagement, it is important to consider the wider landscape of practice.
Indeed, practices change and evolve over time and in different contexts and new challenges require new ways of practising which affect the identities of the academics. Institutional factors, such as introducing new initiatives, goals, directions, and policies at their institution may especially influence academics’ administrative, managerial or leadership responsibilities and hence practices. In fact, the latter is prevalent amongst older academics who often take on management and leadership roles based on their long experience in academia. These roles are often temporary (Cahill et al., 2018). Furthermore, the boundaries of HE are increasingly ‘porous’ and academics are developing a wider range of identities influenced by activity beyond the university (Clegg 2008), such as participating in international projects, cross-disciplinary research or working with governmental and private professional bodies and employers (Martin, Lord and Warren-Smith, 2020). This leads academics to be involved in a landscape of CoPs which extends beyond their immediate CoP. Moreover, such contexts and changes were conceptualised earlier as structure and workplace affordances 2.3.2. To this end, the following section elaborates in more detail on how workplace affordances enable and or constrain the development of academic identities and how academics choose to engage with these affordances.

2.4.3 Co-participation and identity development

Focusing on the situated nature of the practice, Billett (2008) notes that workplaces vary in the affordances to engage in these participatory opportunities, which reflect local goals, norms, and roles. In earlier sections, I pointed out that because academics work in a range of different contexts, academic identity can take different forms. These contexts include the academic’s workplace environment, the national and international HE context, their discipline, as well as social interaction with peers and students. These contexts play an important role in either strengthening or inhibiting the development of academic practice (Johnston, 2016), which in turn impact on academic identity (Lankveld et al., 2017). As a result, the context highlights potential, but also disempowering or exclusionary experiences in which workplace affordances may not be evenly available. The following section considers the notion of co-participation and its impact on older academics’ identity trajectory. The key
aspects of co-participation in relation to older academics discussed below are recognition, collaboration, extensive experience, and formal development opportunities.

The literature review by Lankveld et al (2017), mentioned earlier, summarised the body of literature on the academic identities of university teachers. When considering affordances that enable academic identity development, being recognised as an expert is particularly prominent. Being recognised means to be noted by the members of a particular community for one’s competence in the practice, institutionally but also within their wider discipline practices. It afforded the adoption of a particular identity by being invited to conferences, or being invited to collaborate with colleagues, thus developing expertise identity in the respective discipline. Furthermore, colleagues that were recognised for their practice played an important role, since they acted as role models for their colleagues and modelled desired practices (Lankveld et al., 2017). In other words, the fact that academics were recognised, enabled them to develop their practice, and identity further through the opportunities being made available to them to attend conferences, act as mentors and so on. Engaging in these opportunities developed further the practices of their discipline and their workplaces.

Being recognised is connected to an affordance of collegial and collaborative work practices and relational agency (Edwards, 2005). In this way, academics could both seek and respond to each other in their ongoing interactions across their landscape of practice. So, this sharing of expertise and the capacity to work with others to negotiate meaning has resonance with CoPs. A study of eleven academics (Pataraia et al., 2015), based on in-depth interviews considered academics’ development and professional practice through the exploration of their networks. The study concluded that academics enhanced their knowledge of, and skills for, teaching by engaging in regular discussions with their colleagues, drawing on the relevant expertise and previous experiences of others in their networks or consulting the relevant published educational research and online resources shared and recommended by peers. These elements of collaborative practice thus developed their teaching and research identities by observing others and working alongside their colleagues that were practical in nature. Although the study was not explicit about the age of the participants, the findings align with another study of specifically older academics. Boulton-Lewis and Buys (2014) concluded that contact with networks and colleagues and opportunities to communicate
with the academic community was one of the factors that motivated them to keep working beyond retirement age. Those about to retire academics suggested that sharing their expert knowledge keep them motivated.

Pataria et al., (2015) interpreted data from 37 academics based on 10 UK based universities. His study also examined academics' past experiences as a learning biography which impacted on access to certain institutional affordances. Such interpretation has a particular resonance with older academics given their extensive experience. In the early years of teaching, academics felt reluctant to see themselves as teachers. Once they felt more confident in their role, they developed an identity as a teacher and were able to push the boundaries and innovate. Thus, academics' sense of competence was found to be a key indicator of the development of their teaching identity. Similarly, the growing experience of academics within their research area, develops a confidence as a researcher, likewise a leader when gaining a leadership experience. Koopman-Boyden and Macdonald's (2003) theoretical discussion briefly suggested that, when considering work performance of older academics, their use of expertise and extensive previous experiences may compensate for any decline in other skills.

Institutional affordances for certain practices do not mean that older academics necessarily have access to these affordances or construe them as relevant to their needs. For instance, Gelade’s literature review drew together several issues within the landscape of practice of older academics based on the author’s own experience in Australia and literature review (Gelade, 2013). The author agrees that the take up of development opportunities in the form of workshops or seminars by older and/or more senior academics is limited in comparison to their younger colleagues. Gelade attributes this effect to the stage of their career and life in which the participants assume that they do not need as much training as their younger colleagues. Gelade further explains that this may be dependent on the particular practice, therefore a certain identity, such as a leadership identity. At the same time, the same institution may offer developmental courses because the quality of practices such as teaching have deteriorated and need improvement. In consequence, exploring affordances for developmental opportunities and how these impact on academic identities is vital.
In conclusion, this section explored older academic identities that have been used to capture and contextualise individual subjective experiences, commitments, affiliations, and values regarding being an academic, and to understand these in the light of ongoing HE developments at both the national and institutional levels. The development of an older academic identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of who one considers oneself to be and who one would like to become, therefore the term identity trajectories were suggested.

Therefore, I point out that an older academic identity is constructed and negotiated through social interaction in the everyday landscape of practice. Consequently, the development of academic identity involves exploiting the surrounding practices agentically and as a result changing them. Specifically, four dimensions of co-participation were explored that have a particular affinity to the context of older academics. These were recognition, collaboration, extensive experience, and formal development opportunities.

This last section of this chapter brings together themes from chapters 1 and 2 to first justify the use of two frameworks (CoP, and co-participation) and to propose three research questions.

Following Wenger’s and Billett’s work, sociocultural theories were adopted in the current research study to explore the identity trajectories of older academics for several reasons.

Firstly, to fully explore academic identities, the socio-cultural context in which academics negotiate their identities needs to be considered. Therefore, an approach to identity, which views it as constructed in isolation and from an individual perspective, provides an inadequate basis. This is because academic identities do not exist in a vacuum but exist in social and cultural contexts. Academics collaborate and work with other colleagues across different communities that carry a significant number of cultural dimensions with them.
Similarly, the concept of identity deployed in this study privileges the social perspective to align with other studies of academic identity. To this end, the conceptualisation of identity used in this study is positioned within a sociocultural perspective that recognises identity as a relational phenomenon, mediated, developed and re-negotiated through practice in cultural and social settings and it is referred to as a landscape of practice (Lankveld et al., 2017; van Winkel et al., 2018; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014).

Secondly, it is equally important to explore what restricts academics’ participation and engagement with work practices and colleagues, since such practices can constrain the continuity of the existing communities and academics’ development, but foremost influences their identities. To achieve this, it is important to explore affordances and how academics respond to those affordances, which in turn may change the structure and what it affords. In explaining this, a conceptual framework of ‘co-participation’ captures the inter-dependent relationship between the agency of the academic and their structure. Academics make subjective and situational choices about their engagement with the practice, given the affordances.

Thirdly, sociocultural theories are aligned with my epistemological position which is social constructivism. This means that professional identities are considered inseparable from individuals’ experiences in broader social and cultural contexts. In consequence, the conceptualisation of identity deployed in this thesis privileges the social perspective of the person. Identity is argued to develop as a result of becoming a member of a community. ‘There is a profound connection between identity and practice’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). We fundamentally define ‘who we are’ in terms of how we relate to other members of a group and how we negotiate our participation within the community. The context of this study considers the identity of academics within their workplace context, thus professional identities.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed has affirmed the importance of considering individual, social, and contextual dimensions when investigating older academics’ identity trajectories. Furthermore, having grounded the conceptualisation of identity within CoP and co-participation, there is a need to explore identity when considering their landscape of
practice, affordances, and individual agency as all these dimensions have an impact on identity trajectories. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways is older academics' practice shaped by their individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?
2. How do the affordances available to older academics' practice shape their identity trajectory?
3. How does the individual agency of older academics impact on their identity development?

The following chapter turns to the conceptual and philosophical underpinning of the approach taken to the design of research data collection and analysis.
3 Methodology

The previous chapter developed the background, context, and relevance of this study. This chapter focuses on the methodological approach taken in this study and the method of data collection used to address the following research questions:

1. In what ways is older academics' practice shaped by their individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?
2. How do the affordances available to older academics' practice shape their identity?
3. How does the individual agency of older academics impact on their identity development?

Thus, the chapter starts with a Philosophical Underpinnings and Positioning of the Researcher, followed by a discussion of the Ontology and Epistemology and justification of the interpretative and qualitative approach. Other research approaches are considered and the justification for the ethnographic approach implemented is given.

The chapter takes a chronological view of the methodological processes that were followed. The approach to fieldwork is outlined, including sampling process and pilot interview. This is followed by presenting the data collection methods of interviewing and observations and highlights the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

Following this, the ethical issues in this research are considered. The chapter then describes the data analysis methods used and a summary of six stages of thematic analysis are given. The chapter closes with a discussion of how the researcher maximises credibility and dependability thorough the study.
3.1 Philosophical Underpinnings and Positioning of the Researcher

I come to this research as someone who has been involved in HE as a student, a researcher and as a member of professional services staff working within an academic professional development departments at a UK HEIs. Principally, my researcher’s role was to remain objective, avoid bias and consider myself an instrument of data collection. Having an insider status by being in the actual environment of the participants has practical advantages. These were knowledge of the context, organizational understanding which brings a contextual understanding that outsiders lack, and also ease of access to potential participants (Robson 2011, p.404). However, I admitted a concern over being a young academic while researching older academics, which meant I had to ensure I perceived the world from their perspective. I did not deny my positionality but acknowledged that it was likely to affect my interpretation (Thomas 2009).

Moreover, it is certainly true that the choice of the research design is predominantly based on the nature of the study, the area of investigation, and the objective of the research. But, to some extent, it is also influenced by the researcher’s theoretical perspectives. So, in view of my educational and professional path, the rationale behind my philosophical positions is to be found within an interpretivist paradigm. Having an educational background in Education and having worked for several years across several further and higher educational settings I have positioned myself in a worldview where individuals "develop subjective meanings of their experiences" and the role of the researcher is to "make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p24). Therefore, taking this philosophical paradigm of interpretivism, I am interested to see how different people make meaning of their own experiences. This philosophical view and researcher's positionality is underpinned by ontological and epistemological assumptions. These will be discussed next.

3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

All research begins with a particular ontological and epistemological positioning which reflects the theoretical stance and philosophical underpinnings of the researcher. Ontology
refers to the nature of reality and epistemology refers to how knowledge is understood and created in this reality (Bryman, 2006). Thus, it is critical to ensure that there is an explicit alignment and consistency between theoretical position and methodological view (Twining, Heller, Nussbaum, & Tsai, 2017, p.4). As outlined in the literature review, the theoretical orientation of this study draws on sociocultural theories. The study uses the broader sociocultural and situated orientation to identity and position the study within Wenger’s modes of identification and Billett’s model of co-participation as two theoretical lenses to focus the researchers’ attention and to position the questions of the study (Creswell, 2014).

Billett (2001, 2002), suggests that the exploration of sociocultural elements of identity formation need to acknowledge the interdependence between the individual and the sociocultural environment in which it occurs. Whereas Wenger (1998) highlights that we construct and negotiate identities through participation in a landscape of sociocultural practices.

Therefore, when it comes to ontology, this study is situated within a broad qualitative research approach and involves an interpretive paradigm, which argues that social research yields “multiple realities that can be studied holistically, [and] the knower and the known are inseparable” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.37). Also, research participants are studied in their “natural setting” as “their realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their context” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.39). The interpretive research paradigm is concerned with the construction of meaning from participants’ views in a given study. It involves a "systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct, detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social world” (Neuman, 2011, p.101-102). In other words, interpretivist views, try to find out different interpretations of the same lived experience.

Concerning epistemology, the sociocultural perspective frames knowing as socially constructed through a process of participation in practice. Central to understanding identity development is the need to explore the subjective, personal meanings developed socially and historically. The meaning of professional identity is not fixed but rather emerges through the participants interaction in their social worlds. Reality then is constructed throughout the
“cultural and historical experiences of people” (Sarantakos, 2013, p.37). We can construct different realities to apply different meanings to our experience. How an academic interprets the world mediates their response to it, as such understanding of the world is the perspective of that academic (Mason, 2009). In consequence, these meanings are manifold, requiring the researcher to look for the complexity of different views rather than narrow the definition into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2014). To explore academics’ identity trajectories, the study aims to look at their practice, workplace affordances, and agency. Hence, the need to consider human and agentic action within cultural, institutional, historical, and individual relationships. Such an approach contrasts with the positivist stance, which rests upon assumptions of overarching, fixed laws founded in the notion of a single reality and a claim that “everyone experiences the world in the same way” (Neuman 2011, p.103). In consequence, such views would not fit with the theoretical orientation, and aims, of this study. Furthermore, the approach adopted in this study follows that of major studies investigating academic identities such as those by Becher and Trowler (2001), Henkel (2000), McAlpine and Åkerlind (2010) and McAlpine and Amundsen (2016). These authors also used an interpretive approach in their research.

Given the focus on the exploration and contextualisation of academic practice, perceptions and meaning, an interpretive inquiry and qualitative research approach was considered most appropriate (Creswell, 2014). The following section briefly discusses research approaches, followed by why grounded theory approaches were rejected before a section that justifies the choice of ethnographic approach. Although, both approaches are common when conducting research of perceptions and meaning in the field, the ethnographic approach was more appropriate in the context and the scope of this thesis.

3.3 Research approaches considered

The previous section outlined the appropriateness of the interpretive paradigm to guide the qualitative research design. There are many, varying, types of interpretive research. Cohen, et al (2003) grouped the research into phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interactionism. Creswell succinctly summarises the different approaches into five ‘traditions’
(1998, p.65): biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. As part of the research design process, I considered two potential approaches for this qualitative study: grounded theory and ethnography. This section briefly justifies why I rejected grounded theory in favour of an ethnographic approach.

In grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed an approach whereby data is collected extensively in the field. Data is then used to detail a theory or theoretical model. Several studies were explored that used grounded theory in research on academic identity, for example: Gaisch, (2014) and Van Winkel et al., 2018. My research differs from grounded theory whereby I am not generating a theoretical model. In my research I am looking for common themes and perspectives associated with the identity trajectories of participants. This would have problems for external validity and generalisability (Creswell, 2014). In contrast, ethnography facilitates in-depth study of a single setting or single group of people (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019, p.3).

Having established that grounded theory would be ill suited in this study, I selected ethnographic research. The following section justifies why an ethnographic approach is well suited to the aims and research questions of this study.

3.4 Description and justification for ethnographic approach

Creswell (2014) states that ethnographic research focuses on lived experiences and social behaviours of an identifiable group of people studied in their natural context to develop an overall interpretation of their culture (2014). Approaches to ethnography vary. For instance, the length and level of depth of an observers’ immersion in the natural context of the culture observed, or the type of observation and unobtrusiveness. In this study I align my interpretation of ethnography with two standpoints based on comprehensive work in the ethnographic field by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) and LeCompte & Schensul, (1999). Their characteristics of ethnography focus on:

1. It is carried out in a natural setting.
2. It requires relatively long-term data collection process.
3. It employs multiple data sources.
4. It relies on participant observation, intimate interaction and engagement with the culture/group more generally.
5. It presents an accurate reflection of participants and behaviours, and significance of the meaning participants give to objects.
6. It uses inductive, interactive and recursive methods which are holistic in focus.
7. It frames all human behaviour and belief within a socio-political and historical context.
8. It uses the concept of culture as a lens through which to interpret results.

These points will be addressed in the following subsections 3.4.1- 3.4.4 justifying the “fit” of the study with an ethnographic approach.

3.4.1 Sociocultural perspective of identity trajectories

The ethnographic approach seems particularly suitable for this research because its epistemological assumptions align with sociocultural perspectives of Wenger’s modes of identification and Billett’s notion of co-participation. Wenger’s (1998) communities of Practice (CoP) framework stresses the development of an identity through a landscape of practice that are situated in a cultural and historical context (characteristic 7 and 8). Whereas Billett’s (2004a,c) framework of co-participation stress learning afforded by workplace practices and cultures (characteristic 7 and 8) and how the ways in which individuals construe and elect to participate in such practice have implications for one’s identity. Billett (2001) describes knowing in practice as the result of “reciprocal and interpretative construction arising from individuals’ engagement in social practice rather than being abstracted from disciplinary knowledge or disembodied sociocultural tools” (p. 431). Socio cultural theories emphasise interactions between people and the material world; the tools used; the reification in use; the activities people participate in and above all, all these take place in the naturally occurring settings (characteristic 1). Thus, studies working from a sociocultural orientation acknowledge the contextualized nature of human experience and knowledge and therefore attempt to develop an understanding of behaviours, relationships and perspectives from interpretation and observation of a culture/group members (characteristic 5). Above all, many sociocultural studies adopt an ethnographic approach (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Billett,
2001; Engeström, 2001), including those considering academic identity (Findlow, 2012; Cahill et al., 2018) out of their particular affinity with these concerns.

3.4.2 Theoretically driven inquiry in natural settings

Creswell (2014, p.16) ‘explains that qualitative, interpretive research requires data to be ‘typically collected from the participant’s setting’ with ‘researchers making interpretations of the meaning of the data (collected)’. Ethnography is a widely used methodology to study behaviours of people and specific groups engaged in everyday activities within their natural settings (Hammersley, 2013). This study emphasises academics’ identity trajectories within the context of their workplace – a location where participants engage with colleagues and tools, and develop skills, knowledge, and values (characteristic 1). The setting for academics in this research is the MET environment (pseudonym for the university where the research took place) namely: their office/department where they work; their online environment they work and engage with; their colleagues/working groups, committees, and students they work and engage with; and overall, their teaching, research and management communities they participate in and through. Additionally, as argued in the literature review, the understanding of academics’ previous experiences, development of skills, knowledge and values need to be understood from the perspectives of academics’ individual, social, historical, and contextual dimensions of these experiences (characteristic 7). Hence, the study context aligns with assumptions typical of ethnographic studies in that they set out to build an understanding of the meaning of social life from every day perspectives and interpretations of group members in their natural settings (Hammersley, 2013). This understanding is built through an inductive approach in which the researcher strives to understand without prior assumptions, how participants experience and interpret the world. However, LeCompte and Schensul (1999, p.95), suggest that both the observations and semi structured interviews are always filtered through the researcher’s interpretative frames, by suggesting that, “the most accurate observations and [Interviews] are shaped by formative theoretical frameworks and scrupulous attention to detail.” (Characteristics 3 and 6). Thus, by aligning the research with these views, revealing the meanings underpinning participants’ identity trajectories requires the structuring of theoretical framework to guide sampling, data collection and to sensitise
the researcher’s analysis. In consequence, theoretically based premises were needed to
direct attention of the researcher to aspects of practice and identity trajectories of the
participants. Based on the literature review outlined in the previous chapter, in brief, these
were:

1. Participants’ working life and career trajectories.
2. Requirements for performing and participating in their workplace.
3. Factors that influence participation and engagement at work.

As an overview, Table 3.1 below, represents questions with relating themes across three
broad lines of inquiry and an outline of data collection through interviews and observations
that were designed with Billett’s co-participation framework in mind.
### Table 3.1. Lines of inquiry with themes and data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three broad lines of inquiry within the questions</th>
<th>Themes to explore in relation to RQs:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. In what ways is older academics' practice shaped by their individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ2. How do the affordances available to older academics' practice shape their identity?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ3. How does the individual agency of older academic's impact on their identity development?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection method</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Participants’ working life and career trajectories.</td>
<td>Descriptions of previous and current roles (RQ 1,2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key roles, events influencing career paths (RQ 1, 2,3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection on experiences and looking at future goals (RQ 1,2,3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Int: Accounts of career transitions and the development/changes of multiple identities; challenges and success, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obs: Everyday activities as embedded in a world of practice (meetings, interactions,) multifaceted nature of the activity, prioritisation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Requirements for performing and participating in their workplace.</td>
<td>Engagement in everyday/ monthly/ annually practice (RQ 1,3); Physical and social work environment (RQ 2,3); Values and norms of the workplace and external practice (RQ 1,2,3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on experiences and future goals (RQ 1,2,3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Int: Choices and contexts, challenges and what has been significant about them; Change trigger / reflective practice; Motives and meanings of actions; Explicit and embedded in practice activities, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obs: Everyday activities, Demands, Choices, Physical and material world,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Factors that influence participation and engagement at work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal working environment (RQ 1,2,3);</td>
<td>Accounts of choices and contexts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation with external bodies (RQ 2,3);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise, support, opportunities, and guidance available (RQ 1,2,3);</td>
<td>Physical work arrangements, Colleagues they work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual activity in their social context (RQ 1,2,3);</td>
<td>with; Decision making; Values and Interests, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational changes and developing new practices (time of change) (RQ 2,3);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and beliefs (RQ 2,3);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The multiple sources and point of data collection whilst referring to the broad lines of inquiry will be discussed next.

3.4.3 Multiple sources and points of data collection

Another hallmark of an ethnographic approach is its 'commitment to an accurate reflection of the views and perspectives of the participants' (Creswell, 2014, p.46). When considering all three premises of the study (1. Participants’ working life and career trajectories; 2. Requirements for performing and participating in their workplace; 3. Factors that influence participation and engagement at work), this study aims to explore views and perspectives on current practice. Also, understanding older academics’ life history and transitions involved participants both reflecting on their experiences, looking back at influences and key events as well as looking forward to future aims. In doing so, the inquiry would bring to the fore the aspects of the participants’ agency (Billett, 2006) and also the structure in which these were embedded. For example, the MET work practices, but also the wider HE landscapes impacting their work. A fundamental component of ethnography is participant observation (Brewer, 2003) (characteristics 2 and 4). Observing participants allows for an intuitive as well as intellectual grasp of the way things are organised and prioritised, how participants relate to each other and the ways in which social and physical boundaries were defined (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). When considering all three premises of the study, observations enabled the researcher to understand how everyday practice were embedded in the world of practice – their environment, collegial interactions, available tools and so on. Capturing these helped to contextualise the affordances of the academics in which their practice was embedded. Brewer (2003, p.11) points out that a key aim of the ethnographic approach is for the researcher to become familiar with the day-to-day practices and the meanings of a particular social world. Thus, “finding out things that are not seen as significant but belong to the implicit structures of people’s life” is one of the main aims of an ethnographic approach (Blommaert and Jie, 2010, p.3). Having said that, in ethnography, data is gathered from a range of sources (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019, p.3). Apart from observations, another principal method for collecting data in ethnographic research is interviewing. Exploring the premises above not only necessitated interviews with the participants but also it warranted more time than the most common one-hour interview. Thus, to fully appreciate the
complexities of this inquiry, more interviews were needed. Furthermore, having more time for the interviews meant that interviewing an individual several times (characteristics 2 and 3), a number of different experiences and an accurate view of the participants could be captured. Repeated sampling was needed to return to particular themes raised earlier seeking clarification or extension (White, Drew and Hay, 2009). By collecting data then from several different participants in the same setting, a detailed understanding of the identities of older academics could be developed. Moreover, the method of multiple interviews and observations would allow space for what Cohen et al (2002) calls ethnographic validity – the identifications of patterns and themes that arise repeatedly across the interviews and observations. The multiple data methods would not only produce a rich picture of the identity trajectories and practice of the participants but also the nature of the culture of their setting.

3.4.4 Data collection process

The research questions explored individual agency and how workplace affordances impacted on the identity trajectories in the participants’ workplace. Thus, the explorative nature of the research questions warranted the use of an ethnographic approach to build an understanding of academics’ identity trajectories at their university over an extended period involving multiple open-ended interviews and observations as data collection. These methods needed to be applied with openness to participants’ experiences and meanings while remaining aware of how my own assumptions might shape my interpretations. Currently, the university under investigation (the MET) where the participants work was going through top-down political, economic, and structural changes, which influenced what participants may say and do. Thus it was vital to immerse myself in the academics’ culture as a non-participatory observer over a period of time (Hammersley, 2018). Furthermore, to ensure adherence to prolonged data collection (characteristic 2), an issue of how long the data collection should last was considered. As a researcher conducting a PhD, the time and resources required to be permanently present in the setting are limited. Equally participants, who in this context are senior academics, are always busy, and may be reluctant to give a lot of time for unstructured interviewing and observations. Consequently, due to the time limitations of this study, an ethnographic approach was adopted where data collection lasted
for a total of 1 year over two phases (1 October -December 2018 and September -October 2019). This data collection timeframe was selected to fit within the remits of a PhD research and time available of the researcher’s given the maternity breaks and the participants commitments as presented in the Table 3.2.2 below.

### Table 3.2. Timeline of data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Int 1</th>
<th>Int 2</th>
<th>Int 3</th>
<th>Obs 1</th>
<th>Obs 2</th>
<th>Obs 3/4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathew</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, having discussed the appropriateness of ethnographic approach, the following section summarises steps taken when entering the field.

#### 3.5 Entering the field

Having established that an ethnographic approach was the right approach for this research, I entered the field. The concept of *field* and *fieldwork* have been the hallmark of ethnography (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Fieldwork involves the actual research tasks carried out in a chosen setting or location. The field is a physical setting, with its boundaries defined by the researcher in terms of an institution and people of interest. Fetterman (2010), suggests that fieldwork is the most defining characteristic of ethnographic research. The approach considers how people’s practices and interactions become so routine that they are often not consciously recognised by the participants themselves. Thus, fieldwork involves an outsider seeking *insider knowledge*. The goal is to access the meanings underpinning “social actions,
observe manners and spend plenty of time with informants” and participate as an observer alongside them (Brewer, 2003, p.11). Before entering the field, ethical approval was received, and a detailed discussion of ethical consideration will be discussed in section 3.8 below. The next section outlines the sampling process.

3.5.1 Sampling process

In this research I chose the MET university as an institution. The MET is a large academic institution in the UK. Apart from a small number of post-graduate research students, the MET’s teaching is provided via open and distance learning. The MET works in collaboration with many countries around the globe to build capacity and capability. Nevertheless, in recent years due to growing competition of other universities offering online provision, the MET is going through changes. Focusing on distance learning had particular resonance with current trends post-pandemic (although the data was collected pre-pandemic), where many courses either were taught wholly online or were offered in mix of in-person and online learning modes (Singh, Steele and Singh, 2021). The MET also has ongoing strategic university wide developments focusing on employability and educational sustainability that call for academics to adapt to new ways of working. For example, both employability and sustainability being incorporated in the curriculum and assessment methods. Thus, the MET was selected based on its unique approach to teaching and because it was undergoing a process of change. However, the core work of the MET academics appeared like other universities in that all are involved in a combination of teaching, research, management, and leadership. While teaching may take the form of both F2F and hybrid, it predominantly involves the creation of multimedia learning material. In recruiting participants, the aim was to select a representative subsection of older academics. To get a balanced sample, three out of four faculties were selected, however due to time constrains only three faculties were selected rather than all four.

Having chosen the institution and faculties an ethnographic approach suggests contacting gatekeepers to gain access to the group. This approach was supported by the research ethics committee and so Executive Deans were contacted for permission to recruit participants. Attached to the short introductory email an information sheet was sent to Faculty Deans
Appendix 8-1. Information sheet to ) explaining who I was and the research brief. All three gatekeepers were excellent research partners as they offered instant support and interest in the study. After initial contact with heads of three faculties was made, they either agreed or asked their personal assistants to send the participation information sheet (Appendix 8-2. Participant Information sheet) to all older academics over the age of 50 within their faculties. Initially the age threshold of the academics was set at 55 and over. However, due to a concern that the academics could be recognised within their faculties, the age threshold was lowered to 50 and over. Similarly, the characteristics related to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) such as disability, mode of employment (full time or part time), ethnicity were not specified in the selection criteria to ensure the anonymity of the participants. The personal assistants of the heads were thus as suggested by LeCompte and Schensul (1999) key informants who had a broader knowledge needed in the study. In this case, the personal assistants knew the age of the academics and thus, could suggest the sampling needed. In response I received several offers of participation. In addition, in those faculties where the response was limited, I encouraged the academics who offered their contribution to forward the research information sheet to their colleagues who could potentially be interested and fit the criteria. Both methods brought the required volunteers across three faculties.

In recruiting participants, the aim was to select a representative subsection of the older academics to make inferences about the whole population. The aim was to create a nuanced view of older academics’ identity trajectories. To this end, the sample of this study was acquired by what Patton (2002) calls purposeful sampling. In this approach to sampling, the researcher seeks to discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample from which they can learn the most (Saldaña et al., 2014). Therefore, the purposive sampling was determined with some selection criteria focused on specific personal characteristics necessary to illuminate aspects of identity trajectories of older academics. The characteristics related to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) such as disability, mode of employment (full time or part time) and ethnicity were not used as selection criteria to ensure the anonymity of the participants given the relatively small pool of participants. Thus participants were selected:

- with respect to age, academics 50 and over,
- equal sampling across three different faculties,
- with respect to gender,
• and job role – equal distribution between teaching, research & scholarship and leadership to maintain a balanced sampling.

Participant characteristics

Eleven older academics were identified across three faculties - see Table 3.3. Sampling across three faculties below.

Table 3.3. Sampling across three faculties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Participant Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F_1</td>
<td>Alan, Ian, Alison, Mathew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F_2</td>
<td>Fred, Eva, Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F_3</td>
<td>Lucy, Omar, Zoe, Emma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 shows that although both F_1 and F_2 have four participants each, in F_2, only three participants were identified due to a lack of volunteers that fit the age criteria. The table above also indicates that more males (6) than females (5) were recruited.
3.5.2 Pilot interview

Gathering reliable data involves testing the data collection tools before commencing the research. It involves ensuring that both the researcher and the participants understand the interview questions in the same way as each other (Creswell, 2014). The pilot interviews helped me to identify whether there was a flow in the interview schedule and refine the questions. The interview questions were piloted with two older academics so that I could get an idea about the order of the semi-structured interview questions, to establish if this order worked well, or if any adjustments were required. Furthermore, given that this research focuses on participants career trajectories and personal factors related to their identity I wanted to ensure that none of the questions would be upsetting or generate discomfort. Moreover, I was looking to test the technicalities of recordings.

The pilot study took place over two days and involved nearly two hours of interviews with both participants. After reflection and feedback from the interviewees on the interview questions, some of the questions appeared to be repetitive, so they were merged. For example, two questions asking about past and present practice were combined into one. Also, in the third part of the interviews the sequence of the questions was revised.

As for the technicalities, one pilot interview was conducted via Skype and gave the opportunity to test different methods of data recording. The second pilot was conducted face to face. It was then decided to record the interviews on two devices, as during the Skype interview my recording device ran out of power.

The data from this pilot was not used.

3.6 Data collection methods

Earlier in the section I stated that, in ethnography, data is gathered from a range of sources (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). In this study, to gather relevant data and address research questions, semi-structured interviews and observations were used. Both are pillars of ethnographic research when it comes to data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). These will
be discussed in turns to first justify the use of the methods and the ways how these were used in this study.

3.6.1 Observations

Participant observation requires the researcher to become actively involved “in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data” (Fetterman, 2010, p.37). In fact, observation is “the only field method that allows researchers to observe what people do in real life contexts” (Li, 2008, p.111), rather than relying solely on what they said they did (Ferraro and Andreatta, 2017, p.105). These actions in context may be very different from what participants say they do. The discrepancies between what participants say and what they do may provide important insights. In this study, each participant was observed at least twice offering me the opportunity to closer examine the research setting and participants. This allowed me to obtain first-hand information from their contexts by being there to witness daily situations and developing relations of trust. This trust is vital, given the age and work experience differences between me and my participants. Recognising that close inspection of anyone’s practice is not a comfortable experience, the conversation about observations took place during the initial interview as part of establishing trust and confidence in the process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). During those initial interviews with participants, times for observation were identified. Participants offered one to three targeted observations as a representative sample of their working life.

In total 25 observations were conducted. Eight of those observations took place online using various tools, such as Zoom, Teams, and Adobe Connect. The tool was dependent on the participant’s preference. Observing participants in their natural setting at the MET meant observing online. Fred and Eva’s work was predominantly conducted online, thus their suggestion was to observe their practice online. Table 3.4. The use of F2F and online observations across participants, lists these observations. Details of the specific nature of the observations were omitted to ensure anonymity of the participants.
Table 3.4. The use of F2F and online observations across participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Observation 1</th>
<th>Observation 2</th>
<th>Observation 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F_1</td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>FS2</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mathew</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F_2</td>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Adobe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F_3</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Omar</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Adobe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations had two aims. Firstly, to observe academics during interactions with others and second, to observe practice while working alone. Meetings included online meetings (a natural setting given the distance learning context of the MET) and face to face meetings encompassing various parts of their practice. For example, recording sessions for their courses, informal meetings at a coffee shop, working on their own in their offices, supervision meetings with students, tutoring, presentations/lecturers, or workshops. This gave a grounded sense of the nature and the constraints of their work. The data was collected as notes. When possible, debriefs immediately after the observations were conducted. These usually lasted up to 15 minutes, they were recorded, transcribed, and used as additional data. In addition, in the debriefs I went through the participants’ diaries with them to gather
information on daily activities. The observations provided context and an understanding of whether those personal values/preferences and agency discussed in the interviews matched how the participants behaved and participated in day-to-day practice.

Observing meetings and participants’ interactions omitted another subset of a practice involving writing and reading emails, responding to feedback, reading, planning a day and so on. These activities were captured by observations of participants working alone and were complimented by debriefs (Fetterman, 2010; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). For example, on one occasion a participant had to make a telephone call to his colleague to prompt the colleague to send feedback on a mutual paper they were collaborating on. After the phone call, the participant explained the context of the call, that provided information on the participant’s external collaborations, challenging colleagues they work with, issues related to that project and expectations to meet deadlines. These debriefs were used as data.

Moreover, Hammersley and Atkinson, (2019, p.154) reminds us that using a laptop for recording of fieldnotes may be judged to be too disruptive during an observation during a meeting. He further suggests that “the conduct of note taking must be broadly congruent with the social setting under scrutiny”. To mitigate this, I always had a notebook and a laptop with me during observations. I used a laptop to take notes in situations where other attendees of the meeting were using laptops, otherwise I used a pen and paper.

Also, taking into consideration that the participants were often observed during meetings, some information was gathered on people who were not the main participants. Such information was used to provide the context. To ensure ethical safety of such people a verbal explanation was provided prior the observation that the research did not collect data on them. In most circumstances this was stated by the person being observed. Any questions raised were addressed immediately by the researcher.

“The challenge for the researcher lies in the transformation of observation into fieldnotes” (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999, p.114). Although a broad template (Appendix 8-7. Observation template) was used to make sense of the overwhelming array of information collected during observation. Every observation was unique, and they oriented me to the
field and enabled me to begin to sort out major social and cultural dimensions in the field setting. However, arguably using templates may introduce bias and preconceptions, such biases are inevitable and templates evidence the transparency of the orientation of the research (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Effort was made to avoid potential biases and the template was broad enough to ensure openness to a particular context and practice of each participant. Furthermore, detailed notes were typed up both during as well as immediately after each observation with notes for questions for clarity to be addressed during the follow up or final interviews. Thus, observations functioned as a starting point for subsequent interviews.

3.6.2 Interviews

Another principal method for collecting data in ethnographic research are interviews (Brewer, 2000, p. 18). “Interviewing allows [the researcher] to generate information that would not be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise – both about the events described and about perspectives and discursive strategies” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019, p. 107). The literature on interviews distinguishes three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Typically, ethnographic studies deploy either unstructured or semi-structured interviews due to the nature and philosophical underpinnings of ethnography (Creswell, 2014). As discussed in section 3.4 ethnographic research considers in-depth data collection of accounts of a cultural and socio-historical context. Therefore, my interviewing technique needed to accommodate academics reflections. Given the justification that this research adopted a theoretically driven enquiry around three broad lines of inquiry to guide and focus the study, semi-structured interviews were used.

Semi-structured interviews employ a relatively detailed schedule, and they are used when there is sufficient objective knowledge about an experience or phenomenon, yet the subjective knowledge is lacking. Moreover, semi-structured interviews are open-ended, allowing for flexibility, thus participants can answer as they wish and the researcher may probe these responses while continuing to follow a broad framework, giving a sense of order (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019).
This study adapted a broad line of inquiry based into three areas: 1. Participants’ working life and career trajectories; 2. Requirements for performing and participating in their workplace; 3. Factors that influence participation and engagement at work. These three lines of inquiry were further developed with reference to Billett’s (2004a) framework on co-participation to bring both structure and agency to the fore when exploring the identity trajectories of participants. Thus, although participants were free to discuss their practice and identity trajectories within these three broad lines of inquiry, the schedule used ensured that relevant questions were asked to consider both affordances and agency. Moreover, gaining access to another’s person point of view is closely related to establishing trust between the researcher and a participant (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Establishing trust and ‘empathy’ depended on picking up on social cues, hence recognising what was and was not feasible. Thus, interviewing was foremost about being a good listener, and asking relevant follow-up questions rather than sticking rigidly to an interview schedule.

Interviewing was conducted face-to-face as well as online, using Skype or Microsoft Teams. The choice of the method was made depending on the preference of the participants. Skype is used in an increasing number of studies and is a free synchronous online service that provides the opportunity for audio and video interviewing (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). Microsoft Teams is a tool supported by the MET to allow synchronous communication. Deakin & Wakefield (2014, p.60) reflect on their own online interviews and note that ‘while potential research populations have become increasingly geographically dispersed, technological advancements and software have made communicating over large distances more feasible’. The interviews in this study were conducted online for various reasons. There were practical constraints for the researcher to interview participants that were dispersed in different parts of the UK, while the cost and the time spend would be counter-productive for this research. Furthermore, the data collection was conducted whilst I was either pregnant or with a new-born baby, thus being able to conduct interviews online made it possible for research to continue when I was not available to travel. However, there were also some disadvantages associated with the use of online tools, particularly Skype. During a few instances, the call kept cutting off. To resolve this, the researcher or the participant would restart a new Skype call to continue the interview. After these incidents, the preferred
method for online interviews was put to participants using Teams, as it seemed more reliable. Also, although online interviewing requires reliable technology, where both a stable internet connection and reliable microphone are crucial (Saarijärvi and Bratt, 2021), no issues were experienced, and thus online interviewing proved a useful tool for this research since participants were familiar with its use. Nevertheless, Skype or Teams were used as an alternative to face-to-face interviews. Thus, participants could choose if they wanted to have a face to face or an online interview. Furthermore, occasionally video was used during Skype or Teams calls, however data analysis did not take the visual elements into account. The video was used for the participants to feel more familiar with the researcher, however the visual data were not analysed. Therefore, facial expressions, body language, and other non-verbal signals were not observed and recorded during the interview. Table 3.5. The use of F2F and Online semi structured interviews across participants summarises the frequency of face to face and online semi structured interviews. In total 16 interviews were conducted F2F, whilst 17 were conducted online. No differences were noted with regards to the quality of the data generated of the interviews when comparing online with F2F. This observation aligns with another study combining online with F2F interviews of adolescents and parents suggesting that, combining data from different sources in a single study can provide trustworthy findings (Saarijärvi and Bratt, 2021).

Table 3.5. The use of F2F and Online semi structured interviews across participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Int 1</th>
<th>Int 2</th>
<th>Int 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F_1</td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mathew</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F_3</td>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F_3</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Skype</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Omar</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, participants took part in three interviews each. These were initial, follow up and concluding interviews. They will be discussed in turns next.

3.6.2.1 Initial interview

Firstly, the initial round of semi-structured interviews was conducted (Appendix 8-4. Initial interview schedule) to identify participants’ practice and identity trajectories, but also their current working context and affordances. These initial in-depth interviews aimed to create profiles of participants, the choices they made regarding their careers, the decisions made about their identities and opportunities to engage with or ignore their values. It was recognised that these stories were subjective and therefore participants could omit what they have not engaged with or explanations of why, which underlines the nature of interviews. Thus, probes and elicitation techniques were used by the researcher to get as much as possible from the interviewees (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, the data from these interviews was useful to understand how to plan individual observations of participants depending on their style of work (remote working, limited days of availability at the campus, online observations).

3.6.2.2 Follow up interview

To properly explore the current practice of academics, multiple data collection at various times was necessary to fit with their practice. Thus, follow up interviews (Appendix 8-5. The follow up interview schedule) were also conducted after each block of observations Table 3.2. Timeline of data collection provided the monthly outline of data collection. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss the notes made during observations and discuss challenges at work and what was significant about those challenges. After all, as Eraut (2004) suggests, interviews based on observed activities are used to ground an understanding of capacities needed for practice in a specific activity rather than general evaluative descriptions given by participants. Finally, when building a relationship with the participants, consecutive interviews uncovered more data, as well as bringing an ethnographic validity – the identification of patterns and themes that may occur repeatedly across the interviews (Fetterman, 2010).
3.6.2.3 Concluding interview

The concluding interviews (Appendix 8-6. Concluding interview schedule) were also conducted after final observation. The concluding interviews focused on factors that influenced participation and engagement at work. Similarly, to follow up interviews, the final interview also involved conversations about participants’ final observations. It was at this stage that a couple of participants provided “off the record” information. There was only one ethical response from my point of view as a researcher, which was to respect the participant (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019), therefore such information was not included in the data. On reflection, it made me think that academic practice can be political and challenging.

A key criticism of interviews as a way of gathering data is that the participants construct the narrative they think the interviewer wants to hear (Hammersley, 2018). I believe the nature of my questioning, and the relationships established through several meetings, helped mitigate this; participants were open about things that they felt they could do better, and consistent messages emerged about their working environment. Also, given the nature of ethnography I was able to interview each person at three stages, providing the opportunity to follow up on issues of interest and probe areas in which I felt there was more to find out. With the second and the third interview, the participants were more open and loquacious.

3.6.2.4 Interview’s location and transcription

The interviews took place in various locations, that were mostly suggested by the participant. Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) suggest that interviewing participants on their own territory, by allowing them to organize the context the way it suits them, is the best strategy. It allows participants to relax but foremost it provided insights into their sense of themselves and their world. As earlier stated, given the familiarity with the online technologies such as Skype and Teams, participants on several occasions suggested online interviews. Being able to have online interviews allowed them to be at home, on their own territory. Also, they suggested cafes, their offices, as well relying on the researcher to book a room nearby their usual place of work for the interview.
The interview recordings were fully transcribed: 80% by the researcher as well as an external company that transcribed 20% of the interviews due to time constraints, using a simple verbatim transcription approach (McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig, 2003) where the transcription process focuses on the accuracy of the information content. The rationale for the use of a company approved by my University approved company, with a confidentiality agreement in place, was to ensure I could meet my ethical commitments to both data protection regulation requirements and to progressing my study. This allowed completion of transcriptions of all the interviews I had conducted in the first phase of data collection before I went on a maternity break.

All transcribed interviews were checked for accuracy by checking the script while listening to the interviews. Moreover, when transcribing interviews, although natural speech does not take the form of sentences or paragraphs, restrictions were imposed on it during transcription. The analysis of the transcribed interviews focused on the content of the discussions with the participants. After the initial transcription phase, the researcher checked them for their accuracy and left out fillers, like ‘um’, ‘eh’. Although I have considered asking participants to check the transcript for accuracy, due to time limitations this was not feasible.

3.7 Supplementary documents to understand the context.

Although in fieldwork much of the focus of attention is on what people do (through observations) and say (through interviews), researchers, “should not be blind to the significance of other aspects of social life and sources of data, such as documents and artefacts” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019, p. 124). Several participants offered their CVs, which provided a further source of information about roles and their career transitions. Participants’ online profiles, using LinkedIn and the MET staff profile pages were also reviewed. The CVs and online profiles were useful to understand participants’ career journeys and the scope their practice. These documents were not analysed systematically; therefore they are not included in data collection method. I have read these documents to understand the context. For example, some of the documents like CVs were given to me by
the participants, thus they were supplementary information the participants wanted to share with me.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Conducting ethical research is one of the prime responsibilities of the researcher. Cohen et al. (2007) agree that while it is impossible to anticipate and prepare for all ethical issues in advance, they assert the importance of abiding by an ethical code to bring discipline, direction, and credibility to their research. Similarly, in this study, every possible measure was undertaken to ensure ethically-sound research. This ethnographic research was going to take up considerable amounts of participants’ time; entail some intimate questioning and observation of their behaviour and perceptions. I adhered to maintain the integrity of this research and the participants themselves with the following reflection on the ethical dimension that was assumed throughout the study. As with any other research approach, ethnographic study has ethical considerations at all stages of the research. In this study, I followed British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) ethical guidelines for educational research to aim to minimise harm to participants’ safety and wellbeing whilst maximising the data collection and its potential to make a research contribution. Before commencing data collection, ethical approval was successfully acquired through gaining a favourable opinion from the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC/2986/Iwaniec-Thompson). See Appendix 8-3.

Moreover, an information sheet with a full rationale for the research conducted including forms of participant engagement, commitment and time frame of data gathering was essential (Hammersley, 2017). Thus, a consent form and a participant information sheet were designed and distributed to inform participants about the research purposes in a clear and understandable way. See Appendix 8-2. Participant Information sheet and Appendix 8-8. Consent Form. All potential participants, including gatekeepers were informed of the methods used, goals, data storage and potential risks and benefits of the research, including the voluntary nature of their participation and ability to withdraw at any stage of data collection. The gatekeepers were informed of the procedures. It was at this stage that the initial sampling method was altered given the feedback from the gatekeepers. Two of the
gatekeepers suggested that due to a limited number of potential participants, characteristics such as disability, ethical background, and contract type (full time or part-time) could potentially jeopardise anonymity of the participants.

In this study, each participant volunteered to three interviews and one to three observations at various stages during the one-year data collection period. Throughout the recruitment process and data collection, the participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, in conformity with the conditions for data erasure outlined in the Data Protection Act (2018) and supported by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). None of the participants withdrew and all expressed interest in reading the complete thesis for their interest.

The research aims to collect biographical data from the participants meant that ensuring anonymity was vital to reducing the risk of exposing them or the institution. The data from both the interviews and observations were anonymised so that no individual participant could be identified from their contributions. Each participant’s name was changed by allocating a pseudonym to match different data sources to the same person. Given the senior roles of some of the participants, a considerable effort was made to disguise personal details and descriptions of their practice to ensure their anonymity as a stage of deidentification. For example, their roles were substituted in transcripts by the generic term [role]. In addition, characteristics related to disability, ethical background, and contract type were omitted in the data reporting to ensure that this small number of participants could not be recognised. Also, when writing up the findings it was apparent that some vignettes could not be included in detail without identifying the participants involved. For example, observations of a doctoral supervision meeting which focused on an easily identifiable study could have potentially been linked back to that participant.

In general, the data gathered were not expected to be distressing, sensitive or highly confidential. Nevertheless, the set of data generated from the study remained confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018) and BERA ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018). Both sets of guidelines were reviewed at all stages while conducting this study.
Also, as this research collects data from human participants, there is always a question of data storage and sharing. As discussed in the section 3.5.1, sampling process, 20% of all interviews were transcribed by the approved company provider. The service is approved by The Open University as a professional transcription service, and the provider meets UK data protection regulations. Password-protected access to data was maintained with the provider to access and download the data over one month period. After one month period the data was destroyed from the approved company provider.

All data was anonymised using pseudonyms and privately stored in The Open University’s (OU) research data repository, OneDrive, where the project owner, i.e., the P.I. of this study, retained control of data, since this cloud-based service is licensed for The Open University’s corporate use (The Open University, 2018). Files stored in OneDrive are encrypted to keep the data secure (The Open University, 2018). Hence, data was accessed with the researcher’s OU credentials only. Data generated was also stored electronically in an encrypted, password-protected, USB back-up. Data stored electronically used participants’ coded references so that individuals could not be identified.

Overall, the access and security measures described above helped me to meet the ethical compliance and data protection obligations for this study. By following these data protection standards and ethical guidelines for educational research, I demonstrated my commitment to maintaining the assurances of confidentiality and pseudonymity given to the gatekeepers and participants at the outset of the study. There were no ethical issues I had to deal with, which I had not been able to anticipate.

3.9 Exiting the field

After completing data collection of the second phase, having interviewed participants at three stages and completing observations at least once for each participant, I exited the field. Michailova et al. (2014), remind us that the literature on exiting field is scarce, and from an ethnographer’s point of view, when exiting the field, the process is unique and socially situated. The author’s theoretical perspective suggests that exiting the field is much more than saying goodbye, and it often involves a promise to the participants of the study to
return with the analysis and findings implications. Indeed, most participants of this study expressed an interest in being contacted upon the completion of the study to report back on the analysis of the findings and practical implications.

I was positively surprised by the encouragement and positive feedback from several participants that they had enjoyed my approach as a researcher, and they wished me luck. Also, they reflected on the interviews and observations being a fruitful time of reflection and discussions on their practice. After the viva I will be sending them the thesis to share the findings.

3.10 Data analysis

This section is firstly focusing on the organisation of the data to justify the use of thematic analysis, following a detailed section on six phases of thematic analysis.

3.10.1 Organising the data

In order for the research to be accepted as trustworthy, the “[researcher] must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible.” (Nowell et al., 2017, p.1). I collected a considerable amount of data after two stages of data collection over a one-year period in the field. It is important to note that there is no single formula accepted by all researchers for the analysis of ethnographic data.

Many ethnographic studies use grounded theory as a way of data analysis. In reality, if ethnographic research has time constraints a grounded theory–lite approach is frequently used. This approach involves applying only some techniques of the method for the development of categories and concepts as the data is collected and an understanding between the various categories and concepts (Hammersley, 2018). Such limited use of grounded theory echoes the underpinnings of thematic analysis. Both involve coding and the generation (and interpretation) of broader patterns in data as well as some theoretical
underpinning to orient the research. However, the differences lie in the terminology of both methods – e.g., categories (grounded theory) vs themes (thematic analysis). Hence, although the lite version of the grounded theory is compatible with thematic analysis, this research will adapt thematic analysis definition for consistency. Thus, the study uses thematic analysis, which is one of the most widely employed approaches to qualitative data analysis, in order to gain insights into the community under study (Bryman, 2016).

Moreover, (Fetterman, 2010) argued that thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights. Thematic analysis uses both inductive methods to identify themes in the data, as well as sensitising concepts to draw out themes. In this study, the sensitising concepts were related to the dimensions of Billett’s co-participation (affordances and agency) and Wenger’s modes of belonging. The rationale for choosing an inductive method of analysis is based on expected and unexpected data. Billett’s notion of co-participation seemed particularly broad yet comprehensive to establish themes to guide this study. Thematic analysis then is suitable for identifying patterns and themes within a set of data: generating themes across data rather than creating a summary of experiences as in phenomenological approaches (Braun et al., 2019). Unlike content analysis, thematic analysis does not assign values to the number of times a theme or one of its sub-codes is applied to the data (Virginia and Victoria, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Having justified the use of thematic analysis the following section summarises phases in doing thematic analysis.

3.10.2 Phases in doing thematic analysis

The researcher followed the six-phase process (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun et al., 2019) involved in this approach for doing a systematic and accurate analysis of the data. The phases are described next:

1. **Familiarisation with the data**
The main aim of this phase is to become immersed in and familiar with the content of the data generated during fieldwork through observations, interviews and the document analysis described in the preceding section 3.6. In many ways, it is during the fieldwork that the first phase of data analysis begins (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). During data collection I attempted to transcribe as many interviews as possible and I transcribed the field-notes from handwritten notes into Word documents after each observation. Thus, in this thesis, the first phase of data analysis involved transcribing, editing, and tidying up the data.

As the observations proceeded, fieldnotes from each of the observations were organised into detailed vignettes. To ensure anonymity of the participants only a short version of some of the vignettes are presented in the following findings chapter to discuss the data. Similarly, as the interviews proceeded, the interviews were transcribed. This was an incredibly time-consuming task and, for reasons outlined earlier, it was decided to use a professional transcription company to transcribe some of the interviews. I also listened to the recordings to not only double-check the transcriptions for accuracy, but also to familiarise myself with the data again. Both while transcribing the data, checking the transcriptions for accuracy, and writing vignettes from the observations I was able to engage with the data several times over, which helped me to become more familiar with the material. Transcribing the data into Word format enabled me to turn my field-notes into accessible and searchable text.

When organising the data, the NVivo software package was necessary to manage and analyse such a large data set. All interview transcripts and observational vignettes were imported into NVivo Plus version 12 for analysis in line with recommendations by Woolf and Silver (2017). Data was organised into eleven folders, one for each participant gathering all collected data related to that participant.

In those eleven folders I brought together data from multiple sources (as discussed earlier in section 3.6) by writing a detailed description – which I called pen portraits – of each participant, incorporating quotes from all their interviews, relevant details from my field notes, observation data, and documents that provided further evidence about the things they talked about. Writing them was a very powerful experience. By the end of each one, I
felt as if the person had been sitting next to me, and I was thoroughly immersed in my data. Sharing them here, however, would undermine anonymity, as participants or their colleagues could recognise their profiles.

2. **Coding**

Ethnographers seek to identify relationships across a whole corpus of data to generate understanding of the people involved and their actions. This contrasts with other forms of analysis that may focus on one specific detail or an image. Thus the data coding is ‘unstructured’ in a form of open ended descriptions and analytic categories and codes that capture aspects of these relationships (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019).

In this phase, I identified and provided labels for the features of the data that appeared relevant to the three broad lines of inquiry and the research questions, as well as other labels that were unexpected and ones for which I was not sure where to place. For example, *serendipity* was a reoccurring theme to start with, that eventually featured as a sub theme across two different final themes. I then read all codes again, but this time took care to note the most important remarks, patterns, key events and people, expressions and phrases, keywords, and interesting points. Initially I had over 200 codes. After that, I reviewed the codes and tried to relate them to the concepts and categories in the existing literature and to see whether there were any relations between the codes. As a reoccurring practice I checked all the data which were not highlighted to ensure that I had not missed anything that might be significant.

It was a challenging stage, and I explored several frameworks and had countless discussions with other researchers and foremost my supervisors. I used both NVivo software to code the data, in addition I printed out the data and used pencil to code. Both experiences allowed me to immerse myself with the data and equally have an off-screen time with my study. All in all, the task of coding data is a recurrent one, as new codes and themes emerge, previously coded data had to be reviewed to see whether it contained examples of the new codes (Creswell, 2014).
3. **Generating initial themes**

In the third phase, I moved from describing the data through coding to a “developing conceptualisation of the data” through the generation of themes (Braun et al., 2018, p. 848). The titles of the themes were often generated from the words used by the participants. For example, all academics talked about collaboration, thus one of the sub-themes was collaboration even though it featured evidence when discussing collaboration as an affordance as well as a collaboration as an agentic move. At the same time, I reviewed the literature and interview guides using Billet’s co-participation (2001, 2004a) which sensitised theme generation. Here the NVivo tool was invaluable, as it allowed me to view the same evidence such as interview extracts or observation vignettes attached to multiple themes or sub-themes at the same time. Appendix 8-9. Initial list of themes and sub-themes, lists themes and sub-themes I generated to start with.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2019, p. 168), remind us that ethnographic research has a characteristic ‘funnel’ structure, which progressively focuses over its course. They further point out that the research problem needs to be developed and further transformed when one discovers what the research is ‘really’ about. It was a gradual process but, at this stage, I realised that, although the initial assumptions of this study concerned older academics’ learning in relation to affordances and an agency of an individual, the data was “pulling” me toward an exploration of identities of the academics. Therefore, an analytic task at this stage was to refine and develop my research questions as well as answering those questions. Through weeks of reading and rereading the data I gradually reduced the codes. Having a sharper focus and having redeveloped the research questions, coding was clearer. The initial research questions were:

1. How do older academics maintain their teaching and research practice?
2. How does the learning biography of older academics’ impact on their learning experiences in a workplace?
3. What are the affordances and practices available to older academics in their workplaces to support their learning?
Whereas the final research questions (RQs) are:

1. In what ways is older academics’ practice shaped by their individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?
2. How do the affordances available to older academics’ practice shape their identity?
3. How does the individual agency of older academics impact on their identity development?

This is also the reason, why in appendixes: Appendix 8-1 Appendix 8-2 Appendix 8-8 there are initial questions. This had the effect of combining my data in a holistic way and reducing them to a manageable form.

4. **Reviewing themes**

Having worked through the data and generated themes and linked codes to those themes, the next task was to work on those themes to clarify the meaning and explore relationships between them. This phase was mainly about quality checking. It involved checking the generated themes against the collated extracts of data and determining whether the proposed themes suited the dataset. In this stage, themes were refined, combined, or discarded in case those did not work in relation to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019). The main strategy here was what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call the ‘constant comparative method’. At this stage I spent a lot of time reviewing and discussing the themes with my supervisors, addressing their ongoing questions of the themes and what they represented. This process meant that I kept going back to the data and ensuring that the themes and codes were succinct, yet informative. Once a coherent set of themes were presented, those were reviewed against the entire data set. This revision was essential to determine that all the themes told a cohesive and compelling interpretation of the data, and they capture the essential points to answer the revised RQs (Braun et al., 2019).

5. **Defining and naming themes**

In this stage of thematic analysis, potential themes, and associated data extracts were organised coherently, allowing me to determine in greater detail what aspects of the data
were captured in each theme. Each theme was defined to reflect the key ideas of the theme and how they fit within the overall scheme (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019). Furthermore, each major theme had several associated sub-themes. These are outlined in the mind map of all themes in the table below.

**Table 3.6. Final themes and associated sub-themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Academic practice</th>
<th>Theme 2 Organisational and disciplinary conventions</th>
<th>Theme 3: Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Perceived collaborative practice, work environment</td>
<td>Motivations &amp; Values &amp; Believes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Hierarchy: bullying, unfairness, top down,</td>
<td>Working with other colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Scholarship</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Observing and reflecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived academic freedom</td>
<td>Authority and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice demands and setup</td>
<td>Retirement &amp; Age factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking,</td>
<td>Serendipity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External pressures and conventions</td>
<td>Networking, brokering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase 5 was interconnected with phase 6 of this analysis since both involved selecting extracts across the data set to show the coverage of the themes and develop a detailed analysis of each theme.

5. **Writing up**

In the final phase, an analytic narrative was produced in the form of a report in which themes and sub-themes were presented in a logical way. I started with the general overview of what
constitutes the participants’ practice, where I elaborated on six unique identity trajectories, followed by a chapter on affordances and eventually a chapter on agency in relation to those affordances. The aim was to provide a compelling story of the data, based on the analysis which answered the RQs. Throughout the findings report, I took on a role of the “storyteller” (Braun et al., 2019, p. 848) who showed the analysis of data extracts. In the discussion chapter 6, I contextualised the analysis in relation to existing literature and commented on the degree to which the empirically based pattern from the findings matched the predicted patterns set out at the beginning of the study. Writing up the findings was a challenging task due to an interrelated nature of affordances and agency. Initially I attempted to write about each theme including the interrelated relationship of affordances and agency, however that approach proved to be unclear and complicated. In the final thesis the decision was made to first describe the affordances, followed by the corresponding interpreted agency of the participants in relation to those affordances, that often lead to the change of the affordances and so on. Sub-themes that were not discussed in the affordances section but elaborated in the agency findings chapter were concerning values, motives, and serendipity.

Moreover, before presenting the findings of the data analysis, the following subsection focuses on the validity and reliability of the study.

3.11 Credibility and dependability

As with many studies, ethnography uses criteria to evaluate the quality of the research process and the findings which need to be acknowledged and addressed. Issues of maximising credibility and reliability are strongly tied to the ethnographic epistemological paradigm in relation to the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2014). Several aspects maximising credibility and dependability of this research were considered through the study, as suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) in relation to ethnographic studies. Credibility refers to the richness and accuracy of the findings in relation to, for instance, the wider literature. In other words, credibility is ensuring that the study is dealing with what it claims to be, thus the findings must accurately describe phenomenon. Dependability is
concerned with the procedures and research instruments used, and whether data collection under similar conditions would lead to comparable results.

One of the ways of maximising credibility of the research was the use of triangulation. Ethnography often involves a combination of different data methods. Thus, it is possible to maximise credibility of inferences between these methods by examining various data. In this research, to maximise credibility of the data collected and research findings, triangulation of methods was achieved by employing both observations and semi-structured interviews, and then comparing the results from both methods. All in all, during data triangulation multiple methods presenting a similar perspective increase the likelihood that this perspective is close to reality (Twining et al., 2017). Also, to enhance the credibility of this study, particular attention was paid to the structural context, that also aligned with the sociocultural view of the thesis. Therefore, the thematic data analysis method and the vignettes (a list of vignettes from this study can be found here) were chosen to ensure that the data collection and analysis considered the structural or institutional contexts that might frame participants’ experiences.

Dependability, on the other hand, is concerned with repeatability, i.e., would different researcher with the same data come to the same conclusion (Kazmierska, 2004). Dependability in this thesis was addressed through inter-researcher triangulation of the meaning making from data. Campbell et al.’s (2013) strategy of inter researcher triangulation was employed during the thematic analysis of interview and observation data of the coding scheme along with an interview transcript. The inclusion of multiple people in the research process is desirable for this reason (Twining et al., 2017). The findings of the thematic analysis were presented to two supervisors and two other PhD students who were also using thematic analysis in their study. First, during the second phase of thematic analysis, (coding), two supervisors coded two interview transcripts. Similarly, during the fourth phase of the thematic analysis, two PhD students reviewed one interview transcripts with the coding scheme. On both occasions, disagreements were resolved through discussion and the coding scheme updated to reflect the differences.
Another approach to maximising the dependability of data collection involved the use of in-depth interviews. These were not unstructured free flowing interviews, but semi-structured questions devised out of literature review. On one hand, the interview guide was designed to maintain a focus on the relevant topics and provide consistency between the interviews, and, at the same time, to remain flexible enough to capture the experiences and given meaning from the perspective of the participants, in line with an interpretive paradigm (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019).

Furthermore, credibility and dependability were ensured through transparency. Transparency refers to the explicitness in the design and research and calls for the disclosure of relevant aspects of the process including appended material (not in its entirety but as exemplars of the process) to show the details of the audit and decision making. The research undertaken in this thesis is explicit about its context, participants, and methodology. At every stage, a detailed description is explicitly provided. Twining et al (2017) contend that rigorous research design should ensure transparency to the extent of replicability. I ensured the replicability of the research design by giving a detailed description of the research design process.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the methodology and methods used to provide a rationale for the design of this study. Following an interpretivist view of knowledge creation, this study employed an ethnographic approach encompassing semi-structured interviews and observations as data collection methods. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis and validity and reliability together with ethics were considered.

The following two chapters summarise the findings of this study. Chapter 4. Understanding identity trajectories in the landscape of academic practice, focuses on the practice of the participants and suggest a typology of six identity trajectories. Whilst chapter 5. The interplay of affordances and agency shaping older academic's identities, focuses on the dynamic of five affordances and individuals’ agentic movements.
4 Understanding identity trajectories in the landscape of academic practice

As argued in section 2.3 Theoretical framework, both academic practice and academic identity are constituted in the interplay between agents (agentic academics) and social structures (affordances). The concept of identity drawn on in this study aligns with definitions which present it as both a social and individual construct (Billett and Pavlova, 2005). The identity is constantly reconstructed, dynamic, and consists of multiple identities across one’s landscape of practice (Wenger, 1998).

The first chapter of the findings (4. Understanding identity trajectories in the landscape of academic practice) focuses on the practice of the participants. Practice is conceptualised as a holistic way of thinking that integrates what people do, where they do it, with whom and for what purpose. It links the person with the activity and the context in which the activity occurs (see Schatzki, 2001; Gherardi, 2019). Thus, a practice-based analysis can offer insights into the social, cultural, and contextual factors from which practices of academics are produced (Beckett & Hager, 2002). Furthermore, participation and non-participation in academic practice develops and redevelops participants’ identities (Wenger, 1998; Billett and Pavlova, 2005). These sections, outline how participation and non-participation in practice reflects older academics’ evolving identity. In other words, identity development and change occur in response to the changing practice of the academics. Thus, the descriptions of participation in practice are primarily an account of the expression of identity.

This chapter addresses RQ1. In what ways is academics' practice shaped by older academics' individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 4.1 summarises the development of participants’ practice, exploring previous experience, qualifications, and ways academics inhabit their roles illustrates the temporal nature of academics' practice – that is, infused
with layers of the past roles, future trajectories, experiences, and contexts. Section 4.2 summarises tasks and projects within three broad areas of academics' current practice. These three areas are: teaching, research and knowledge production, and leadership. The section proposes a typology of six identity trajectories based on the practice described by the participants. The purpose of both sections is to demonstrate what participants do in their practice. These sections conclude with a presentation of a typology of identity trajectories using Wenger’s model of engagement, alignment, and imagination.

Chapter 5. The interplay of affordances and agency shaping older academic's identities sets out to demonstrate how participants' identity trajectories are afforded, which both enable and constrain their identities and practice. This chapter includes subsections on how participants respond agentically to those affordances and that can lead to the change of the affordances and enact the development of their identities.

4.1 The development of academic practice

The orientation of this study aligns with the view that ones' practice and identity not only have a social genesis but also emerge from ones' personal histories, prior experiences and practice (Billett, 2006; Eteläpelto et al., 2013). In section 2.4 I argued that academic identity is informed by the workplaces and roles one holds in society, which changes with context (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Martin, Lord and Warren-Smith, 2020). This argument suggests that roles are a way for individuals to interpret who they are which serve as “major identity badges for situating individuals in the organisation” and their disciplinary communities' (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008, p.327). This section aims to provide a backdrop to the sense of how participants’ practice has developed and why this is important in relation to their identity trajectories. Identity trajectory in this thesis is understood as a sense of an individual’s entity and how they are moving to either establish themselves as a participant in a landscape of practice and conversely, shaping an outward trajectory. Outward trajectories mean for example moving away from the current role, or sporadic engagement with certain practices such as course production. Previous, current, and also future experiences and possibilities pave the way and alter these trajectories.
Table 4.1 below describes the roles assumed by the participants that encompass all formal roles across their career. The use of the term role is defined in this thesis as an interpretation of who academics are in an organisation (Ashforth, et.al., 2008). The role titles and the range of practices were collated by reviewing interview transcripts. The sign (x) indicates that the participant explicitly referred to the specific role during the interview. No symbol indicates that there is no data to suggest that the participant was involved in the given practice or held the specific role. As prior experiences were brought to bear on identity development, the roles cover those beyond the current HE roles. These include: Secondary Education (Secondary), Further College (FE), English Language Teaching (ELT), Private and Public Sector, Higher Education (HE), and the MET. Four areas of practice encompassing participants’ previous roles were identified in the data. These were:

- Roles related to teaching
- Research and scholarship
- HE leadership
- Specific disciplinary roles in private sectors.

Table 4.1 uses definitions of practice and projects (Schatzki, 2001) in relation to the roles of academics. Practice refers to what people do in everyday work on a wider level, such as teaching practice, or a research practice. Projects are more specific; they are a range of ways to participate in the practice. To put these definitions into context, doing theoretical research is a project that constitutes a broader Research and Scholarship practice of that academic, whereas roles refer to formal positions. Overall, participants' roles and projects provide a background to their wide range of practice but also show a distinctive and dynamic nature of the UK HE sector that has an impact on participants' practice and their identities. In general, the table shows a progression from outside HE to inside HE to Inside the MET and in each band, a transition in seniority.
### Table 4.1. Participants’ roles across a landscape of practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary or FE Teacher</td>
<td>Secondary/FE/ELT</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Teaching and Curriculum Development</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Lead and management at middle and senior level</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry-level roles in</td>
<td></td>
<td>Various discipline-specific</td>
<td>Entry-level projects across various disciplines</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public / Private Sector</td>
<td></td>
<td>practices</td>
<td>Consultancy projects with a range of organisations</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level roles - Advisor</td>
<td>Private/Public sector</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research and publications</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Process, monitor and manage [discipline] projects</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director/Founder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MBA business and management project</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Management, organisational leadership</td>
<td>X</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Fred</th>
<th>Matt</th>
<th>Emma</th>
<th>Alison</th>
<th>Eva</th>
<th>Omar</th>
<th>Zoe</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Ian</th>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
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</table>

X: Participated
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>HE</th>
<th>Teaching, research, management</th>
<th>Doctoral research project</th>
<th>Teaching and curriculum design</th>
<th>Theoretical and empirical research</th>
<th>Teaching, research, management, and leadership</th>
<th>Lead and manage at a school level</th>
<th>Strategic and academic leadership and management</th>
<th>Executive leading of a university</th>
<th>Lead and manage courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research fellow / Lecturer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean of School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice-chancellor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer / Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>The MET as a specific HE institution</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Write, produce, and present courses at the MET</td>
<td>Consultancy projects with a range of organisations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chair, lead and manage courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
<td>Lead and manage at the head of a school level</td>
<td>Leading and management of research projects</td>
<td>Theoretical research and publications</td>
<td>Empirical research and publications</td>
<td>Research leading and management</td>
<td>Working with external partners</td>
<td>International links in research collaboration</td>
<td>Leadership in research, teaching, professional activities and/or policy development</td>
<td>Development and implementation of innovation, scholarship, and enterprise</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Administrative, leadership management</td>
<td>Networking and partnership building projects</td>
<td>Senior-level institution leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
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</table>
Three observations are particularly important in understanding participants' unique identity trajectories concerning their past experiences based on Table 4.1. **Participants’ roles across a landscape of practice** above. These will be explored in the subsection below. First, the table demonstrates how the different trajectories of academic practice resulted from discovering a passion for a discipline or a transition into an academic role from other sectors with a strong teaching, research, or HE institutional leadership element in them. These previous experiences provided the backbone for the development of their academic practice and, therefore, academic identities. Second, going through the experience of doctoral research had a particularly significant impact on how participants viewed their academic identity. They associated doctoral studies with the beginning of their academic identity, and their doctoral discipline shaped what was accessible or inaccessible for them in their future academic trajectory. Third, the analysis presents how participants took on the lecturer and senior lecturer role at some point in the participants’ trajectory.

4.1.1 Trajectories towards becoming an academic

This subsection discusses participants’ transitions towards academic roles. For the majority of the participants, academic roles started with doctoral studies where they developed a passion for their discipline. Other participants transitioned to HE academia from sectors that had teaching elements in them, therefore providing the participants with opportunities to engage with teaching practice and where they could develop a teacher identity. Overall, most of the participants had worked for the MET for at least 21 years, in contrast to only two participants joining the MET in the last five years. Table 4.2 blow accounts for the length of time the participants have worked at the MET.

**Table 4.2. Participants' time in roles at the MET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>n=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>n=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+</td>
<td>n=5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upon appointment to the MET, participants held a variety of roles. For nine participants, this included time served as an associate lecturer or a lecturer and for the remaining two in senior leadership roles. Thus, upon the appointment to the MET university, participants' identities were already focused on either research, teaching, management, and, for a small proportion of participants, leadership.

Table 4.1. Participants’ roles across a landscape of practice indicates that, although all but one participant were first employed outside of HE across the public or private sectors, six were in entry-level roles in the private and or public sector, before or while studying for university degrees in their twenties or early thirties. Entry level roles required little to no professional experience, and they introduced academics to various fields in which they built basic skills and knowledge for a specific occupation. Four participants did not elaborate on these roles, mentioning only the opportunity to travel abroad [Adam, Eva], and 'trying different things' [Omar]. The descriptions of first roles were given as 'various temporary roles' [Adam, Zoe, Eva] or different six-month work experiences [Emma]. On the one hand, the fact that participants did not elaborate on their first roles in much detail suggests that they did not develop an identification with a particular occupation or considered them significant. Thus, holding various entry-level roles outside of HE did not indicate much impact on their professional identity as an academic. Their professional identity trajectory appeared to start forming with doctorate qualifications and roles in the HE sector, as they passionately discussed these experiences in more detail. On the other hand, for two participants, [Adam, Emma], entry-level roles outside of HE impacted on their transition towards academic roles within HE. An example presented below exemplified how initial experiences were vital to this participant.

... as a younger [person], I was motivated by the need to make my time count, to cram in as many experiences as I could. To try different things, and not to be stereotyped or pigeonholed at too young an age ... I wanted to see the world ... But while I was travelling I encountered, witnessed at first hand some of the ... problems in the world. So that planted a seed of concern that stayed with me for the next few years, and it’s what eventually led me to do when I did decide to go back to University and get a
degree. And that led me to my choice of PhD and so that's how I've made my career. [Adam]

This extract showed how, although Adam's travelling experiences allowed him to explore and try various things, he came to realise that his passions were for exploring practice in a specific discipline area he felt strongly about. His identification with 'problems in the world' at a young age formed his mission. He recognised his discipline and consequently his education and subsequent academic roles led to a career which formed his identity.

Furthermore, Table 4.1 indicates that only four participants, all within the same faculty, worked in the public or private sector up to a senior level role such as managers, directors, or co-founders of private companies. These roles were in different sectors, including Finance, Business, Social Care, Law, Health sector, and Private Research organisations. The participants described these roles in more detail, which indicated their developing expertise and identities in specific disciplines and identities as managers and leaders. Having professional experience outside of the HE sector meant that participants identified with and built on multiple identities in addition to their academic one. Academic identity is similar to professional identity, but it relates more closely to discipline-specific teaching, research and scholarship and/or leadership projects within the HE sector (Deem, 2006). Significantly, these four participants’ previous roles were somehow related to either teaching, research, or HE institutional leadership. Alison, for example discussed how some aspects of her previous role helped her in the development of her academic practice and identity.

I had some teaching background, which meant that I understood the associate lecturer and student perspective, which enabled me to move into this regional manager/student experience manager, lecturing management role. That involved me working on course teams, and providing that practitioner-based focus, and my understanding of how students learn into the course teams, which helped create the design. [Alison]

This example indicates how Alison's experience in teaching, (that was her role at that time) understanding students and understanding the course's practice gave her a sense of the sort
of activities an associated lecturer was required to engage with. Although she did not elaborate on whether she aligned her previous practice to the new workplace, she felt the value of her experience in her new role as a leader of the faculty in the HE sector.

Three other participants [Zoe, Lucy, Emma] transitioned to the HE academic sector from other teaching sectors, including the secondary school sector, English as a second language (ESL) or further education sector. Similarly, to those above, two participants [Zoe, Lucy] held senior roles before moving to the HE sector. By engaging in projects within teaching practice, the participants started developing their teaching practice and managerial and leadership practices in more senior roles. One participant [Zoe], in particular, had an exciting transition whereby the initial role was within teaching practice, followed by work abroad for a charity, after which the participant returned to a teaching role almost identical to the one held previously.

I kind of left the UK thinking that I might not want to work in doing what I was doing, which was basically [teaching] and further education, and I thought OK, maybe I'll come back and do something completely different. But I didn't, I came back and found myself doing the exact type of job as I was doing before I left. And I figured that I wanted to do something that would, I don't know, just help me change direction or do something, but basically I came back and I wanted to do a master's. I finished the MA. I passed it and went straight on to do the EdD while working for FE [Zoe]

This extract shows how returning to a role held previously made this participant reconsider the focus in their role, resulting in enrolling on a masters and a doctorate programme. This example illuminates how participants returned to their previous practice, in this case, an enactment of a teacher identity; however, they purposefully expand that practice by getting relevant qualifications and more experience. As also exemplified in the earlier quote from Adam, other roles made participants either realise or reinforce the academic identities they wanted to develop and pursue further.

Transitioning to the HE sector for two participants meant they felt like they were developing an academic identity. This is exemplified by Zoe below:
There's a real distinction in a lot of universities, which I didn't know when I made the shift from FE to HE, there's a real distinction between teacher education and other education academics and teacher education are not, only just have, are not completely grounded in the university, but once I shifted from teacher education to the master's then yes I was there, I was properly a university academic. [Zoe]

This subsection focused on previous experiences of the participants before transitioning towards the HE sector at the MET university but also transitioning within HE as the participant starts to feel like an academic and being considered as one. The data indicated that participants’ roles and practices varied across the private sector, further education sector and other HE universities, revealing a plethora of developing professional identities and unique identity trajectories across a landscape of practice. These identities included leader, manager, researcher, teacher, [discipline] consultant and or advisor, lawyer, accountant, and social care worker. In this study, participation in practice is understood as the expression and or an enactment of identities related to those practices. Thus, participants’ participation in teaching practice is understood as the expression of a teacher identity, and the development of leadership practice, means the expression of HE or private sector leader identity. The analysis indicated that academic identity developments typically start with embarking on a doctoral study, as a result of a concern in the world that they began to identify with, or a way to reinforce or supplement a core identity as a teacher. The following findings report on what some authors consider as a 'ticket' to an academic advancement (Eddy & Rao 2009, p.7) - doctoral study.

4.1.2 Do academics need a doctorate?

All but one participant obtained a doctorate qualification. The time when they undertook their qualification varied between the early or mid-career stages of their career. The concept of early and mid-career is open to interpretation and may be different for individuals depending on their discipline, institution, confidence levels and other factors. In this study early stage is understood when one starts to engage with a new practice, develop basic knowledge, skills, and abilities of this practice. In an academic career that is typically around
31 years old (Larkin and Neumann, 2009). Whereas mid-career is understood as an academic between 5 to 15 years of engagement in a specific practice. Section 1.3 earlier elaborated on these challenging interpretations. The type of doctorate participants held included eight PhDs by thesis and two academic Doctor of Education (EdD). In the case of Alison, who did not have a doctorate, her transition towards HE was very different. Alison holds other discipline-specific qualifications and extensive prior experience at the senior level from the public sector which she leveraged to secure a first part-time role as a lecturer and, eventually, a director role within the MET university. Yet, the lack of a doctorate has been a barrier for her to progress into further senior academic roles as illustrated below.

So, I am realistic enough to realise that an Executive Dean post is out of reach, because I don't have a PhD. I don't, because of the fact I came to academia so late, I don't have a particularly strong scholarship background. It really shouldn't make a difference for an ED role, but it does. Therefore, that avenue is blocked off. [Alison]

Alison talked about her frustration of not being able to progress into an executive dean (ED) role as she does not have a doctorate, despite having relevant experience. This finding shows how the MET university have set boundaries concerning the essential qualifications for senior-level academic roles, which affects the extent to which academics can move in their roles. Since the doctorate degree requires candidates to make a significant contribution to new knowledge, it is therefore seen as a ‘ticket’ to advancement to a senior role in higher education, which allows academics to hold a specific recognised identity in their community (Eddy and Rao, 2009, p.7). Academics without doctoral degrees might, to a greater or lesser extent, be more peripheral than central in the academic community, which affects their role trajectory (Robinson and McMillan, 2006, p.334). At the same time Alison being an associate dean would not be seen as a peripheral member. Zoe made a remark about the doctorate qualifications in relation to academic identity:

There are teacher educators who don’t have doctoral degrees. There are academics that don’t have doctoral degrees. I was really surprised when I went to [University], and I found that there were colleagues who didn't have doctorates, because I assumed, in fact, I had at one stage in my life been told that people who work in
universities all have doctorates. And I think when somebody wants to enter into one of those spaces that certain things are expected and required of you. And one of them, I think is that it's much harder for you to allow others to put you down or to feel put down if you know that your qualifications and what you come with is equal to the best of them. [Zoe]

Zoe’s example illuminates how, in her mind, doctoral qualification allowed a mutual understanding and respect between the members of that community. Whereas an academic without a doctorate may be perceived as an ambiguous figure by not having the same experience as their colleagues. Her description shows an example of how a qualification can be interpreted as one’s identity. Both examples indicate that a lack of doctoral qualification has twofold impact.

4.1.3 Inhabiting lecturer and senior lecturer roles

All participants of the study progressed at least to the level of lecturer and senior lecturer role. However, these roles varied according to the projects adopted and were partially shaped by participants' previous experience. Organisational and individual dynamics were also influential. Projects are conceptualised in this study as a range of ways to participate in a broader practice of teaching, research and or leadership (4.1). Inhabiting the role in the context of this study means being engaged in practices related to the role.

The evidence below highlights different trajectories taken by participants despite occupying the same role of lecturer and senior lecturer. Consequently, different trajectories afforded the opportunity to develop different practices and to develop related identities and sub-identities and thus expressing relevant identities (for example, teacher) and sub-identities (for example, teacher leader). The data also reflected the dynamics of what Wenger (1998) defined as full participation and peripherality. Namely, projects participants were engaging in regularly, for example, teaching practices. Whilst other projects the participants were engaged with occasionally and ad hoc on the peripherality of their practice, for example research. The respondents’ descriptions indicated how these various peripheral and fuller participation practices evolved and changed its positions with time.
Three participants [Emma, Alison, Alan] started as associate lecturers, working part time alongside other jobs. An example of which is presented below,

I worked for various institutions, so I did a bit of teaching at [University]. I was on the list at [University] to do various teaching bits when they needed somebody. I did some teaching for [university x] And in parallel then I applied at [The MET University], so during that year, to become senior lecturer. So I applied, got a job on the new [discipline] course at the time, so I sort of did the two jobs in parallel for most of the year. Eventually, I applied for a permanent role at [The MET], got the job in 2000 and have been here since. Although my role does not involve teaching anymore. [Emma]

This respondent's example represents those three other participants mentioned above whose identity as a lecturer-teacher gradually developed through parallel and part-time roles at different institutions. For these participants, their trajectories into securing a permanent senior lecturer's role meant working for several other universities, building up a teacher identity rather than a solid research-focused identity.

In contrast to the example above, another route to senior-level roles was exemplified by six other participants [Eva, Omar, Adam, Fred, Ian, Zoe, Lucy]. This is reflected in the quote below,

So I started my proper academic career as it were as a research assistant where I was teaching a lot and then I became a lecturer in [...] at the University of [...] where I could focus on my research. I was at the University of [...] for about 13 years, and by the time I left, I was Senior Lecturer and then Head of the Department with management and leadership responsibilities. [Eva]

This extract shows the respondent's transition between roles and between practices that provided the respondent with the experience necessary to gradually develop identities as a teacher, researcher, leader, and manager within their roles. Five other participants' careers aligned with the transition exemplified above as they identified themselves as teachers and peripheral researchers at the beginning of their careers with a gradual transition into more research, management and leadership identities as time went by.
Furthermore, for four participants [Matt, Alan, Ian, Alison], the transition to a lecturer role occurred after a mid or senior role outside of HE. The specific discipline in terms of consultancy and managerial/director roles has been omitted to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The example below shows the transition to the HE sector at a later stage of the respondents' career.

So always been in the public sector, came to education and academia late. I don't have a conventional academic background but managed to get a lecturer's role. I applied for a part-time lecturer role within the University. That was part-time fixed term. Got that job, that morphed into a permanent role, I was the senior lecturer for about two/three years, where I did a lot of management and leadership. [Alison]

Alison's quote highlights the development of her leadership and managerial identity within the HE sector. There is a difference in the role between Eva and Emma where those participants gradually moved from either teaching or research-focused role into leadership and management, whilst Alison moved directly into leadership and management given her previous experience. Some participants' senior lecturer roles remained teaching or research focused. For example, Lucy talked about her love for teaching,

I don't really have any major ambitions to move up into more managerial posts though. [...] I am a good teacher, I am happy to listen and to really think about how can I help someone to understand something [Lucy]

Overall, this section has evidenced different trajectories into lecturer and senior lecturer roles. The evidence shows that the nature of these roles varied, reflecting the different identity trajectories. For example, Alison's enactment of her senior lectureship involved developing a leadership and managerial role within the HE context. In contrast, Emma and Eva's primary focus was on the development of research and teaching identities, which eventually developed into management and leadership. The trajectory into the lecturer role varied, and the practice in the same role varied; thus, participants’ descriptions illuminated the development of various identities and sub-identities. Therefore, the focus here is on how
growing experience provides a context for the development of different practices and the enactment of related identities. This specific term identity trajectories will be expanded more in the section Towards a typology of six identity trajectories.

4.1.4 Section conclusions

The participants' previous experience illustrates the temporal nature of academics' practice in that it is infused with layers of the past roles, experiences, power relations, contexts such as HE and non-HE sectors or specific discipline-based communities. These previous experiences are part of the narrative and transitions of each academic life. They are important to our understanding of how participants expand and rebuild their practice and identity across a landscape of practice.

In particular, the data showed how varied previous experience outside of the HE sector impacted on the academics' transition into the HE sector. Participants talked about how having a role as a lecturer at a university gave them the recognition as a 'proper' academic in a way which never happened when working in FE and other sectors. While others, on the other hand, discussed how their lack of doctorate meant they could not pursue certain positions. Both examples indicate an alignment required to both be a 'proper' academic by others and progress in terms of roles in the institutional structures.

Participants' previous experience encompassed several practices, within which lay the genesis of related identities. Participants' trajectories encompassed several practices (teaching, research, leadership, management, consultancy, etc.) across various sectors (HE, other educational sectors, Finance, Business, Law, etc.) and individual subject disciplines. Also, given the variety of tasks and projects achievable within the same roles individual academics can have a different trajectory within an academic practice that encompass a diverse range of communities related to their practice. These trajectories are an ongoing identity construction due to the changing forms of academic membership through their expanding experiences, located in communities in and outside of their workplaces as well as disciplines contexts (Smith & Rattray, 2016). In particular, when holding the same role lecturer or a senior lecturer, participants practice varied. For example, some participants
talked about the gradual development of their leadership identities, whilst others highlighted the development of their teacher identity.

The next section relates the past experiences and array of participant identities to their current practice and current roles. Six identity trajectories are presented which describe unique identity trajectories across all eleven study participants. The purpose of including the six identity trajectories in the table 4.2 below is to map out and visually represent the similarities and differences regarding task and project engagement of the participants between these trajectories.

4.2 Towards a typology of six identity trajectories

This section presents an account of current academic practice across their personal landscape of practice. Scholars studying the nature of practice argue that no practices (projects, tasks) are superior, because 'practice is practice', and one practice has no greater value than another (Wenger, 1998; Schatzki, 2005; Nicolini, 2012). Therefore, the practices' order in the table 4.3 carries no significance. The list of projects and tasks below summarises participant accounts, which will be elaborated further in this section.

The term project was already defined and exemplified in section 4.1 in relation to illustrating older academics’ practice and projects. Following Schatzki’s (2001) account of the elements of practice, the terms tasks is even more specific than projects in relation to one’s practice. Hence projects are general summaries of a specific aspect of participants practice, whereas tasks are more detailed descriptions within those projects. To give an example, providing feedback to students on their doctoral manuscript is a task, in a project of student supervision, that constitutes a broader teaching practice of that academic. The general understanding of the projects and tasks give the practice its identity, both discursively and practically.

This section aims to represent participants’ practice by presenting Table 4.3, encompassing three broad areas of participants practice (teaching; research; and institutional leadership). The table refers to the current projects and tasks engaged in by the participants in their
everyday practice. They do not include previous projects and tasks engaged in within their previous roles, as shown in Table 4.3 the tasks and projects in Table 4.3 have been mapped across individual participants. Using similar devices to the previous table, the sign (x) indicates the participant was involved in this practice, as they either mentioned it during the interview, or they were noticed during observations. When there is no symbol, it indicates there is no data to suggest that the participant was involved in this activity or that they were not involved. Furthermore, the participants were clustered together to introduce the typology of six identity trajectories that will be discussed in the sub sections 4.2.1- 4.2.6. These similarities and differences will be evidenced by quotes in the subsections 4.2.1- 4.2.6.
Table 4.3. Participants’ current projects and tasks within their identity trajectories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Fred</th>
<th>Matt</th>
<th>Emma</th>
<th>Alison</th>
<th>Omar</th>
<th>Zoe</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Ian</th>
<th>Eva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signing and writing supportive statements for students’ administrative forms, conference/ training funding etc.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responding to and communicating with students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewing candidates for PhD scholarships</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing mutual expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring and coaching the research project</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying and suggesting readings relevant to students’ work</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborating with other supervisors on research areas, methodology and structure of a student’s thesis</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introducing students to networks</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving written and verbal feedback on students’ writing</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing and preparing students for their viva voce exams</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commenting and contributing to journal publications</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Updating knowledge within the areas of students’ research</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of PhD candidates during viva voce examinations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity trajectories</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate supervision projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition</td>
<td>Course production and presentation</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in online forums dedicated to students’ courses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitating face to face seminars at study weekends for undergraduate and master students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading and evaluating relevant literature related to the writing of courses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapting course materials to students’ need, levels and up to date content</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Generating, creating and recording media resources for courses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving and receiving feedback on course content for other contributors of the course</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liaising with members of course production to ensure quality and relevance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading the production and the presentation of the courses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Validating; Approvals, Standardisation of programmes and degrees</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introducing innovative approaches to course design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance and course budget allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring and developing staff careers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking with fellow research colleagues, practitioners, consultants</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for research opportunities at events, online and through their networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- x indicates presence

117
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conducting applied research</th>
<th>Building relationships across various disciplines and sectors</th>
<th>Collaborating on course content production</th>
<th>Applying for research bids</th>
<th>Undertaking data collection such as interviewing, observations, text analysis, quantitative analysis, lab work, interventions,</th>
<th>Writing, reviewing or contributing to publications</th>
<th>Seeking practical application of research findings</th>
<th>Disseminating research at conferences and similar events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducting theoretical research</td>
<td>Writing, co-writing and publishing theoretical research</td>
<td>Updating knowledge within the areas of their students' research</td>
<td>Updating knowledge related to participants' research</td>
<td>Reading and updating knowledge related to participants' research</td>
<td>Preparing and editing research proposals</td>
<td>Leading and managing research projects</td>
<td>Exercising quality control in the research such as journal editorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading &amp; managing research</td>
<td>Preparing and editing research proposals</td>
<td>Leading and managing research projects</td>
<td>Exercising quality control in the research such as journal editorship</td>
<td>Distribution of human and finance resources for research</td>
<td>Academic editorial work</td>
<td>Giving national and international keynote talks</td>
<td>Assessment of candidates for scientific awards,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and dissemination of research</td>
<td>Preparing and editing research proposals</td>
<td>Leading and managing research projects</td>
<td>Exercising quality control in the research such as journal editorship</td>
<td>Distribution of human and finance resources for research</td>
<td>Academic editorial work</td>
<td>Giving national and international keynote talks</td>
<td>Assessment of candidates for scientific awards,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
<td>Leading the development and implementation of various school/faculty/university strategies</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting and making decisions related to the direction of the faculty, or the university as a whole</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working on policies and strategies of the faculty or university</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating in institutional governance and strategic boards</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presenting awards to others for their work recognition</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership building</td>
<td>Seeking and building links and partnership opportunities between the university, business and community</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty and schools brokering for potential partnerships</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings so far have described how the previous and current practice of older academics make up their multiple identities. Before each identity trajectory is explored, it is crucial to point out the framework and understanding underpinning the analysis of these identity trajectories.

The six academic identity trajectories observed in this study are defined by six dimensions of modes of identification established in section 2.3. The first three are engagement, alignment, and imagination proposed by Wenger (1998) in his conceptualisation of identity formation and development. Furthermore, apart from evidencing the three dimensions of Wenger’s framework mentioned above, this section reports on additional three dimensions of identification which were broadly described by Wenger as non-participation yet critiqued for their lack of detail in empirical studies. In consequence, other authors attempted expanding Wenger’s dimensions of non-participation further, for instance Solomon (2007) proposed negative alignment in her study of students experiences in studying maths and Jerdborg (2020) considered unengaged alignment, unaligned engagement and identity of nonparticipation when discussing alignment with educational demands. Thus, despite these explorative studies, a consistence in terminology is lacking. This study explores three dimensions of non-participation as unengagement, unalignment and unimagination which helps to explain the findings and in result is a unique contribution to knowledge by exploring Wenger’s framework in the context of older academics and by expanding understanding of non-participation in practice.

In consequence, the six identity trajectories will be presented in a form of representative quotes to represent six dimensions of identification. An explanation of each dimension of identification was presented in section 2.3.1.2 that elaborates a conceptual framework of this study. It is vital to point out that the following six terms are understood as a dynamic continuum:

- Engaged - unengaged
- Aligned - unaligned
- Imagined - unimagined
For example, a researcher from trajectory 5 is neither engaged nor unengaged, but they can be located in between on that continuum as they occasionally publish limited empirical research, and they talk about themselves as former researchers. At the same time, they imagine themselves to have that research identity by talking about research being part of their practice. The purpose of the presenting of six identity trajectories is to differentiate each identity trajectory to show the complexities of academic identity development. A summative representation of the typology of six identity trajectories considering six dimensions of identification is presented in table 4.4 below. Again, following a similar nomenclature to the previous two tables, the sign (x) indicates the participants' engagement in practice within a given trajectory was given evidence, as they either mentioned it during the interview, or they were noticed during observations. When there is no symbol, it indicates there is no data to evidence their dimensions of identification or that they were not mentioned by the participants. The participants were clustered together and named to characterise and to distinguish six identity trajectories across the participants’ sample. These are briefly summarised in the Table 4.
### Table 4.4. Identity trajectories of older academics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Area of practice</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Unengaged</th>
<th>Aligned</th>
<th>Unaligned</th>
<th>Imagined</th>
<th>Unimagined</th>
<th>Identity trajectory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan, Fred</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1- Researcher and Institutional leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt, Emma,</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 - Institutional Leader and Imagined researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3- Institutional leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4- Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoe, Lucy</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 - Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam, Ian, Eva</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 - Teacher and Institutional leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional leadership</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chapter findings 5 will elaborate in more detail how these academic identity trajectories were enabled and constrained by affordances and individual agency (subjectivities).

Following the seminal literature by Becher and Trowler (2001) and Henkel (2000) this study differentiates between research and teaching identities, which are generally acknowledged to be the two main domains of academic practice (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012; Skelton, 2012), but also, given the age and experience of the participants, the data suggests adding a leadership identity as interpreted by participants accounts. But it needs to be acknowledged that the separations between the three is contested, and they are considered integrative (Clarke et al., 2012). Moreover, this study adopts a view that participation in a landscape of practice generates and develops unique identities (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, each of the three broad identities (teacher, researcher and institutional leader is made up of several sub-identities within its category. This is not to say that developing, for example a teacher identity, means that all participants develop the same sub-identities. Instead, the sub-identities represent the uniqueness of each participant. This study found that the construction of academic identities is a continuous process; therefore, the identities presented below are snapshots of one moment in time. As a result, the projects, and tasks within Table 4.3 and Identity Trajectories in Table 4.4 describe the development of these three central older academic identities. (Wenger, 1998). Significantly, the sub-identities sometimes cross over. For example, all three central identities incorporate a manager identity. Instead of evidencing each identity and sub identity, which would necessitate a long list of quotes and observation vignettes, these sub-identities emerged through the interpretation of participants' tasks and projects from Table 4.3. Each identity and sub-identity are only linked to an individual participant. Fuller accounts of the development of each of these identities and sub-identities will be evidenced when presenting six unique identity trajectories.

The aim of the subsections below is to illustrate how participants understand and interpret these trajectories and how they experience and resolve tensions between their multiple identities. Above all, the identity trajectories are a reflection of the current practice and identities of the participants which are shaped by their past (hence references will be made to Table 4.3) and current (hence references will be made to Table 4.4) experiences as well as
reflecting on their engagement with envisaged future opportunities. It is crucial to point out that as in the discussion 2.3, the conceptualisation of identity in this study is expressed and or enacted through participation and non-participation in practice. Thus, for example, an engagement in teaching practice, means the enactment of teaching identity. Similarly, a development of researcher identity means a development of research practice that has an impact on research identity of the participant.

The six trajectories will be presented next.

4.2.1 Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred)

Engaged researcher and leader.

Table 4.4 indicates that both academics in this trajectory developed their research, teaching, and leadership identity throughout their career. Both Alan and Fred obtained their doctorate and gradually moved from lectureship, senior lectureship to a professor role and they engage with research and leadership activities most frequently. Table 4.3 indicates that both Fred and Alan have been conducting empirical and theoretical research and regularly publishing their outputs and disseminating their work. As 'old timers' (2.3.1) within their research communities, they are recognised by being invited to conferences, asked to be part of new research projects, mentor their work colleagues, and supervise PhD students. Their engagement with research and scholarship tasks and projects is represented in the quote below:

One of the ways that I've managed to juggle so many things is to make a rule absolutely not to take any work that could be unproductive regardless who is asking me. But of course a lot of the time people ask me very sensible things to be done so obviously that's a good fit to my role. And my capabilities so I just get on with it and do it. But equally there are loads of projects that I initiate because I think that there is a need for it so I can push with things with other colleagues if I see that there is a need for it. Sometimes I also get invited to do some work externally based on my networks and expertise. Sometimes some of the work I do feels like a faculty needs
someone like a broken record about certain issues and people do tend to listen to me. So if there is someone like me like researching professors and leader in the faculty saying it tends to have a bit more impact than if it's from central of the university. [Alan]

Alan not only talked about being invited to collaborate, but also how he initiated new research and leadership projects that he felt there was a need for. He identified himself as a researching professor and a leader that can make things happen based on his role. At the same time, he talked about how he did not engage in projects he considered unproductive. The quote represents how the participant understand his role and responds to and initiates the engagement in the landscape of his practice. Furthermore, developing research practice that expresses his identity as a researcher encompasses other sub-identities such as: networker and collaborator, research manager and applied researcher.

*Aligned and unaligned researcher and institutional leader*

Both participants talked about the alignment of their practice to fit with the ever-changing trends in their discipline and the MET ways of working. For example, Fred suggested:

> In most academic roles there’s an element of people defining their own workload and priorities, but obviously with a quite close collaboration with line managers who are keeping an eye on things. So, there is quite a bit of way in which I am sort of self-directed. But clearly, if there were things that were manifestly not being delivered, there would be an issue. But there is room for quite a lot of negotiation [Fred]

Although both participants described a great deal of freedom in deciding what they could be involved in, these were negotiated with their line managers or other relevant colleagues. Thus, there is an element of alignment with the institutional needs that impact what participants can engage with.

In contrast, Alan’s quote above in the first subsection which discussed engaged researcher and leader indicates that his role as a professor and a leader gives him the power to
introduce innovations and changes. Being in a position of recognition, he can challenge and unalign current practice to change the ways of working. Although, the concept of recognition will be explored in more detail in section 5.2, in brief, recognition links to the age of the participants as they had to work intensively for a sustained and long period of time to earn that recognition from others. In fact, he saw his position as one that allowed him to discuss changes in the current practice to create new ways of working. This idea of having to mediate between the institutional leadership and departmental colleagues below was made easier because of his authority. Being in a position to have the authority to potentially unalign practice is connected to time that participants have had to develop this authority and gain recognition, thus it reflects the age of the participants. The quote below, evidences how Fred developed his leadership practice through observation.

I’d been for a couple of years representing my department on the faculty’s research committee, so I sort of understood how the committee worked. There was a sort of pattern of operation I could pick up from my predecessor. So there’s an element of learning on the job. [Fred]

Fred talked about understanding how the department operates which illustrates his alignment to the norms and practices of what is involved in the role. The quote also evidences a method of learning on the job that encompasses observation and reflection. Such is afforded by the time the participants had in their roles as a way of developing their competency in their practice and thus expressing identity as a leader.

Imagined and engaged researcher and teacher

Imagining themselves as researchers has particular importance for Alan’s and Fred’s academic identity. They both negotiated the time they have to spend on research and aim to focus on research in their future roles that indicates their commitment to the development of a researcher identity trajectory.

The data suggest that, although both participants were engaged in leadership, their descriptions of this practice was different. Although they recognise themselves as leaders,
they see it as a part of their role currently they have no intention of maintaining this role in the future. Instead, they wanted to focus on their research and teaching.Being an institutional leader was seen as a temporary role which presented an opportunity appropriate to their stage of academic career. They welcomed the change, but their role complimented their research.

I envisage staying in my current role for another couple of years. I think then I’m really quite keen to get back into some respects where I started, as an active course production, having more time for research than I do in an academic leadership role. [Fred]

Although they used to be involved in teaching, this practice was limited to doctoral supervision. Their limited engagement in teaching was, however, something they both would like to change in the future. Therefore, they imagined themselves as teachers who would be able to engage with the teaching practice more fully one day. Moreover, both participants’ accounts were rich in detail on the enactment of their leadership and researcher identity and rarely describing teaching unless when discussed the previous and future practice that illustrates how they identify with their roles and current practice. The participants did not express any tensions caused by the temporary discontinuity of their teaching identity. Instead, they seemed satisfied with their current roles and the development of their practice. As evidenced by Fred below:

I suppose I have a nervousness in terms of the MET systems as to how some processes and ways of doing things may have moved on, since for example, I was last actively involved in course presentation. And so I may have a bit of a learning curve to get back on top of things as I once was but I don’t see that as a major hurdle. But I would still say research is my main passion when considering next steps [Fred]

Fred located himself in the environment through his imagination, defining his identity not only by connecting it to course presentation but also by distancing from it when it comes to daily working practice. He was aware of his limitations but found it difficult to shake free from time and place to do work which he hopes will be possible in the future. In consequence,
Fred's quote on being unengaged in teaching practice means the participants had to align their practice to focus on the busy practice of leadership. Although he felt that he would be able to go back to teaching if the time would allow him to do so, having gone through a necessary skills update, he still prioritised his research as one he felt particularly passionate about and thus imagine himself as a researcher. In result, the comments really depict the pursuit of researcher practice, that lies in the heart of these participants above leadership and teaching.

**4.2.2 Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)**

_Engaged, imagined leader and unengaged teacher and researcher._

Table 4.1 indicates that both academics in this trajectory had an active researcher role in several different universities in their previous positions. They were recognised for their contributions by research and teaching communities which provided them with credibility and the experience in taking and developing leadership roles. This is evidenced by Matt’s quote below:

> To be a leader in HE I think you have to have some credibility in your own teaching and research, but it depends on what kind of an institution you are in. It isn’t that people are drawing every day on my background in [discipline] So you have to have what I call a street cred if you like to be engaged in the leadership and I had that from my previous roles I suppose [Matt]

They both obtained a PhD and gradually moved from lectureship to senior lectureship to a professor role at several UK and international universities. Currently, they devoted most of their time to institutional leadership. They gradually took on more responsibilities within management and strategy and thus engaged most frequently at the faculty and university level. They primarily identify themselves as institutional leaders and managers. This is evidenced by Emma’s quote below:
Post holders like myself, we don’t do the teaching or a lot of research that other people do, but we do the management and leadership roles. I do have quite a large number of meetings, and so I have to make sure that I’m relatively well prepared, so that I can just go to one meeting, and then immediately go to the next one without having time to do any reading or a lot of thinking in between [Emma]

As evidenced in the quote above, Emma imagined herself as a part of a bigger community of leaders who do not engage with research and teaching. They recognised the broader landscape of academic leadership, and they understood that they were not unusual. They saw their identity as institutional leaders primarily even though research and teaching had value for them.

_Imagined researcher_

Both Emma and Matt talked about research as being important to them, and if they have the time, they occasionally contributed to theoretical publications. Therefore, they still imagine themselves as belonging to the community of researchers and thus identified themselves as researchers. This is evidenced by Emma:

I do feel that, I mean I'm the[role], but I have no time or I've had very little time to do my own research, and I don't feel particularly good about that. So I do want to, I mean I do still publish and I supervise PhD and MD students, but it's on the edges of my time [Emma]

Emma’s quote indicates the values the participants of this trajectory shared with the broader community of other researchers - research is an important part of their academic identity. Emma remarked that she did not feel good about not engaging in the practice that feels close to her heart. It is at this point that a distinction between the participants in this trajectory and Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) (where participants engaged with research on a regular basis) was necessary. In consequence I distinguished these two trajectories by using the term imagined researchers. Matt and Emma’s accounts were focused on their leadership practice, with a desire to return to research, an activity
which remains important to them. Therefore, they were not as fully engaged in research as the participants in Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred). Also, their position in contrast to the previous trajectory, created tensions in how participants felt about their research identity that became untenable. Participants recognised they should be more engaged in research but did not offer solutions in overcoming these tensions, apart from engagement with doctoral students and occasionally focus on theoretical publications when they have time. In the quote below, Matt referred to his upcoming retirement which he considered to be an opportunity to return to his researcher identity. However, the tension for him was that the world has moved on and his research would need a considerable update.

I always thought when I retire, or stop being [an institutional leader] I can go back to write books which I abandoned. But when I tried to do that I suppose but the world has moved on. [Matt]

The quote thus illuminates that the participant was aware that his practice was out of date. He understood that to call himself an engaged researcher in his field, he must remain actively involved. Also, even though he was retiring he will not be able to become an active researcher in his discipline anymore as he feels his discipline has moved on. This finding is unique for the academics who are about to retire, as they have been engaged with other practices that limited their engagement with research.

Finally, although both participants were defined as imagined researchers due to their desire to undertake research, neither of them expressed the same feelings towards their teaching identity that was also limited due to their focus on institutional leadership practice.

**Aligned and Unaligned Institutional leader**

Similarly, to Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), participants discussed their agency in taking decisions related to their practice. Although they understood the degree in which they were able to make decisions on future directions of the institution to align with the MET's parameters. This is evidenced by Emma, below:
I've got more responsibility, so I can take decisions as well. That's probably also something that I appreciate. Of course, I've got to make sure that what I do fits in with certain parameters, and if I'm not quite sure about a decision I go and talk to the Dean about this, who's also my line manager. But I can take decisions, and I think that's something that probably differentiates my current role from teaching or research. [Emma]

Being in a position of an institutional leader almost allows for a local form of practice unalignment as often these decisions have no precedents or require innovation to adapt to the trends and dynamics of the ever-changing, HE and broader context affecting their practice. Although, institutional leaders must align practice with university strategy or plans as well as regulatory requirements in a broad sense, the decisions they make at school or faculty level are challenged thus not aligned with current ways of doing things.

4.2.3 Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison)

Aligned and engaged institutional leader

In Table 4.3. Participants’ current projects and tasks within their identity trajectories, the data indicates that the participants’ primary focus is on engagement with the practice of institutional leadership. Alison’s extensive previous experience had a bearing on how she enacted her role in senior leadership. In fact, she compares HE context to her previous roles.

The context [for academic leadership] is somewhat different in an academic institution, because you have all this person power, and the freedom. But ultimately, leadership is leadership, management is management. And it's about working with colleagues in a very subtle way to ensure that they don’t feel threatened. Academics feel threatened if they are managed too tightly. But also recognising that it's the skills that are important, not necessarily the label that you bring [Alison]

Alison had to negotiate the alignment of her previous leadership identity within the different context of HE. Her previous experience provided her a particular insight into how to
approach leadership and managerial responsibilities in the HE sector. She referred to subtle
differences and the recognition of the particular context of HE, which shape how leadership
and management are enacted. Even if she emphasised that her previous working experience
was of help, it was apparent that the way she learnt her job duties was strongly
reconstructed in the new context of her practice. She indicated an understanding of how her
practice had to be aligned to the new context to redevelop her leadership identity in an
academic context. Alison’s experiences of being aligned in her institutional practice are in
contrast to the previous two trajectories Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader
(Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)
whereby those four participants talked more explicitly about unalignment of their leadership
practices.

*Imagined teacher*

A participant’s previous practice in leading and managing courses indicates the development
of her teacher identity, as illustrated by the quote below:

> So again, strong managerial leadership function, but also understanding how students
behave. From that I then applied for my senior lectureship, so on the basis of my
teaching experience, my course team chairing experience, because I’d started to chair
some courses in presentation, and that university wide impact. I then applied for the
[current senior role] because it was another managerial/academic role. So it's about
building the experience, both academically, building your credibility with central
academic colleagues. Making sure that what you're offering adds value and direction,
and so you can get things done and move things forward. [Alison]

Although this participant currently did not focus on teaching, she imagined herself to be a
teacher by referring to her interest and extensive experience in teaching, pedagogy, and
students’ journeys. Nevertheless, her identity focuses on HE leadership, which could be seen
as an old timer through HE and private sector experiences. This interpretation adds to the
notion of old timer discussed earlier in trajectory 4.2.1. Throughout her account, she
discussed her leadership and managerial practice in great detail, focusing on transitions and
experiences that built her leadership and management identity. By indicating innovative approaches to deal with challenges in her role, she suggested an approach to engagement that impacted on the development of her leadership and management identities.

**Unimagined researcher**

*Table 4.1* indicates that Alison has no doctoral qualifications. Furthermore, while all the other trajectories encompass experience in research at some stage, this one does not. Although the academic gradually built on her limited teaching experience across HE sector and private sector, her efforts were primarily focused on the leadership of courses. In her interview, she summarised her trajectory:

> So always been in the public sector, came to education and academia late. Don't have a conventional academic background, don't have a PhD, have no desire to get a PhD because it just doesn't work the way I work. But have a very strong interest in teaching and pedagogy, which is how I've come into this role. [Alison]

Alison had no interest in gaining a doctoral qualification and the analysis of her responses do not suggest an imagined research identity, as was the case for other participants. More specifically, she felt the need to point out that she did not imagine herself identifying with research as her practice did not align with such an identity. Here, it is important to refer to subsection 4.1.2 which reported on participants’ doctorate qualifications and their impact on how they are viewed by others as well as institutional requirements in senior roles. In that section, Alison talked about her frustration of not progressing into a senior role as she does not have a doctorate, despite having relevant experience. She was aware that she was unable to progress beyond her current role despite the fact she felt she had the relevant experience and skills. However, the context and the value of doctoral degree means she did not align her qualifications to the ones that are required. This is also even though she aligned her teaching, yet her gaps in research means she could not progress further in an institutional role. The MET’s requirement mean that senior roles require a doctorate, which directly impacts on Alison's trajectory beyond her current role.
4.2.4 Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar)

Engaged and aligned researcher

Table 4.1. Participants’ roles across a landscape of practice shows that Omar's practice is focused on research and teaching. He conducts empirical research and regularly publishes in highly ranked journals, writes book chapters, and contributes to various projects. As evidenced below:

I’m excited about the launch of [work on his discipline]. That’s already having an impact on the industry, improving the [subject specific]. I’ve just had a paper published in a journal which is a really important paper for [the field] receiving lots of interest already. [Omar]

Omar developed his researcher identity through a traditional doctorate-lecturer-senior lecturer-to-professor trajectory. He gradually engaged in the development of necessary skills and capabilities within his research communities. Over time, he became a recognised expert in his discipline and within the MET. He is what could be described as an ‘old timer’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) within his research communities. He is recognised by being invited to conferences and asked to be part of new research projects. He continually engages and pushes the boundaries of his discipline as recognised by others within the research and industry sector. These affordances confirm his status as a discipline research expert, providing him with opportunities for the future development of his researcher identity. His account was focused on the research practice that he identifies with. This is exemplified by the quote below:

I've got projects that run several years into the future already. We've got initial funding from two research funding bodies. But certainly we’re expecting to carry this work forward beyond that current research grant. I’m sure I will be wanting to do more filmmaking. I've got lots of ideas for further documentary projects. I've been invited back to [country], because we made a project earlier this year there [...] So at
the moment my future for the next five years or so is pretty well plotted if you like. So it's not so much hoping as managing all that. [Omar]

Despite the vast experience as a researcher, Omar’s initial alignment of his discipline was problematic:

There was a time when, for academic reasons, I couldn't reveal my [discipline] interest. Because when I started as an academic way back, [discipline] was not seen as a valid scientific subject within the discipline of [discipline]. If you reveal that you’re involved with you ran the risk of being seen as not a proper [occupation]. And when I started work here when it was really important to establish status as having really good [discipline] being researched and taught here, I couldn't reveal that part of me if you like. [eventually] there has been a sort of, not a transition, but an important shift, but it was at least 10 years later, probably 15 years later [Omar]

Omar’s quote above indicates alignment concerning his discipline as a newcomer to fit with the established academics’ discipline at the MET. He was flexible enough to follow the practice of the MET, which was both a practical and required decision to develop an identity in a discipline of interest preferred by the MET. Although he could have changed his employment, he aligned his research identity to be recognised by his research colleagues. At the same time, he continued developing the unrecognised discipline that eventually sparked interest and recognition and led to the old timers (his MET colleagues) accepting the new practice. The ongoing commitment and pursuit of his discipline highlights his strong identification with the discipline and his development of a researcher identity in that discipline.

Teacher

Apart from his focus on research, the participant was involved in teaching and leading modules, as summarised in Table 4.3. It is also here that the specific context of the MET highlights the tasks and projects the participants are involved. Overall, the frequency of project and task intensity with which he talked about his research were more noticeable than
his teaching practice. Although he currently develops courses with other colleagues and takes leadership responsibilities in the courses, he describes his teaching with less enthusiasm. For instance:

I'm expecting to lead as a course team chair [Omar]

Really from quite early on I took on leadership roles in producing new courses. So I've chaired quite a few in the time I've been here, all about [discipline]. [Omar]

In the account above Omar uses the phrase that he is 'expected' to lead. This seems to indicate that he engages with the leading side of teaching as necessary and as stipulated from top down, rather than of his own choosing. Although, taking on management and leadership responsibilities in course production was also accounted for, it was not elaborated further. Although he clearly deals with management and leadership of his research projects, forms of institutional leadership do not interest him, hence he is both an unengaged teacher and a leader doing the minimum he has to in this respect. However, he talks with passion about filmmaking for his courses. Getting involved in making films themselves indicates that he goes beyond the usual engagement in module production. Therefore, the course production side of teaching and collaboration excites him. Thus, there are certain projects within his teaching practice that he engages with passion, such as creating course content, whereas others such as course leadership that he did not feel particularly excited about.

When it comes to tensions in managing all these identities and the work required in undertaking it, the participant stressed the time commitment and busy schedule in dealing with it all.

4.2.5 Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe)

Engaged and aligned teacher

Table 4.1. Participants’ roles across a landscape of practice indicate that both academics in this trajectory come from FE backgrounds where they developed their teacher identity. They obtained their doctorates while teaching and holding senior teacher roles. Going back to the
quote in section 4.1.1 when discussing paths towards becoming an academic, Zoe talked about how she felt when transitioning into the HE context, whereby she felt like a 'proper academic' by taking a role as a lecturer at the MET that involved teaching and research. Although when moving to HE, both participants had to align their teacher identities, their transferable skills were quickly recognised by their teaching community, where they smoothly moved to be regarded as teachers. In the quote below, Zoe remarks on her transition:

There's much, much more freedom in HE, and that remains the single most dramatic difference that in FE you had to turn up at a certain time every day. and, in terms of the skills, I think, if you like, the additional skill that you need in HE is the capacity to manage your time, because there is quite a fair amount of autonomy. [Zoe]

As evidenced by Zoe above, a very functional way of working in other sectors restricted her space for role development. In contrast, Zoe saw the HE sector as a place where they gained flexibility, freedom and autonomy in both the type of practice they engaged with and the patterns of their work. Such an environment fosters room for professional development driven by the individual. Aligning their practice and thus identities to HE context meant they had to learn how to utilise their academic freedom. Lucy, in the quote below, described:

I have very fixed ideas on what constitutes good writing and they tend to rely on me to give them a helping hand when necessary. You know so that gives them the freedom to think about other ideas because they know I will drive them back if necessary. I am a [discipline] specialist. So we all have our strengths and we all bring this together when we work together, and we know that we can always ask one another if there is a query that we have so it’s a good team but we all have the same work ethic. So we all tend to involve in lots of things and that can get in the way of producing things quickly. [Lucy]

As evidenced by Lucy’s quote above, the participants in this trajectory are valued for their teaching experience and their expertise means that they are asked to be involved in course production collaboratively, where the team relies on each other. Their accounts mainly
referred to their teaching practice, where they engage in tasks and projects involving continual development of their practice and therefore teaching identity. They were both very passionate about teaching, including course production, chairing, and presentation. These examples indicated that they are both engaged and aligned teachers following the requirements of their university to do their job well. They align their skills with what is required in producing and presenting their courses, but they also align their practice to work collaboratively to produce good quality courses.

Overall, both the participants do not aspire to be leaders or managers in their teaching groups and are satisfied with the level of responsibility they have. This is exemplified by Lucy’s quote below,

I don’t really have any major ambitions to move up into more managerial posts though. [...] I am a good teacher, I am happy to listen and to really think about how can I help someone to understand something. I was a good researcher because I was wanting to understand the research teachers’ point of view and I wasn’t trying to do anything other than understand and to help. The last 3 years I spent focusing on writing new courses for the [pathway a] which absolutely is my focus. [Lucy]

This representative quote illustrates that, they both seem to be satisfied with the engagement they have in teaching practice, which includes leading the modules. Therefore, there is a difference how leadership in teaching is viewed in teaching, that they enjoy, whilst they do not seem to be interested in institutional leadership as that does not interest them.

*Unengaged imagined researcher*

Although Lucy and Zoe both read research for their own scholarly development and occasionally publish theoretical papers or write chapters for books, they are unengaged researchers. Lucy and Zoe both alluded to research being something they would like to spend more time on; however, they seem comfortable and happy with the current practice, whereby their teachers' identity is their primary focus:
I've spent much of the week working on courses: I've written, I've reviewed, I've chaired, I've examined a viva of a PhD thesis. And I've seen a call for papers which I would like to hopefully respond to by the end of January if I find time. I used to be a good researcher but focusing on courses at the moment. [Lucy]

Lucy's remark on 'I used to be a good researcher' means that she did not consider herself to be an active researcher, however she recognised the importance of research, and therefore she imagined herself to be one. The willingness and imagination to be a researcher does not infer an identity conflict. This stance is in opposition to Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma), whereby the participants of that trajectory felt uncomfortable with their lack of engagement in research practice. Although both participants made research contributions in a form of chairing doctoral Viva Voce exams and occasionally publish academic papers, they themselves felt they were not as engaged as they would like to be. This dynamic illustrates the changing identity from an engaged researcher to a less engaged and unengaged researcher in practice that is recognised by the participants themselves. They both, however, wanted to imagine themselves as researchers even though their practice seemed limited. It is also in this example that the alignment mode of identification illuminates that both Zoe and Lucy feel there are certain requirements in remaining an engaged researcher. Lucy used to consider herself to be aligned with the practice, but she is no longer due to her time commitment. Aligning with research practice means being more frequently engaged in the research practice.

4.2.6 Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva)

Engaged and aligned teacher and leader.

Table 4.3. Participants’ current projects and tasks within their identity trajectories indicates that academics in this trajectory have developed their practice and enact identities across teaching, leadership, and research through various external and previous roles in the private and educational sector and their roles within HE sector and the MET university. Along with the teaching and research, they gradually engaged and develop their leadership and management practice.
Table 4.4 above indicates that these participants’ everyday practice in teaching is centred around course production and presentation – thus, they are course team members. They also sometimes lead courses. There was no data to gauge whether they were engaged with doctoral supervision. Their accounts were focused on engagement in their development of teachers and teaching leader’s practice whereby they put a lot of effort into courses they create and lead. This is evidenced by two quotes below:

My role at [The MET] was a typical split between teaching, research and admin and increasingly management and leadership really. [...] I think for me personally I think I’m a good teacher, a really good teacher, both face-to-face and in terms of course creation, so I think that’s where my real expertise lies. And for about 10 years of my time here I’ve focused on producing and leading courses. [Eva]

I think there's many satisfying parts of my everyday job. There is the satisfaction of doing a good conference presentation, the satisfaction of writing a good journal article. But I would say the most satisfying thing is producing a good course that the students like. [...] That is the most satisfying part of what I do. [...] I would say the future is to produce this course, produce another, make some other good strong contributions to teaching, and then go into retirement. [Adam]

Although both participants talked about all three broad areas of their practice being teaching, research and leadership, they in fact identified with the roles of a teacher and leader of courses more strongly. They focused on the role they feel they were particularly good at, therefore that is where they invest themselves the most. They feel competent and recognised, and indicate their teaching engagement together with teaching leadership as their expertise. The third participant classified as fitting into this trajectory: Ian, on the other hand feels overwhelmed by his role:

So I feel like I have a workload of two jobs which is common. It's a heavy workload. I haven't been able to deal with it particularly well. I mean if you are in a course production you are in a bit of a treadmill particularly if you're chairing
production because you are constantly reviewing what people have done and giving them suggestions sometimes meeting with them, sometimes refining their drafts, finding the best way what you think it needs to be done, whilst sometimes working developmentally with the author. But that sort of crowds out for everything else. [Ian]

This quote illuminates that for a course to be produced, the team must work in collaboration and thus they have to align their efforts. The nature of production at the MET university does not afford working individually on a course, hence they all had to align their efforts which has an impact on their identities. The academics in this trajectory feel pressure in making sure these efforts are aligned with expectations. They all pointed out the importance of students and other colleague's satisfaction based on their collaborative work on the courses. Thus, these academics' teaching practice is strongly linked to leadership and management practice development. They described people management, consistency in course production, and other aspects of working with people, indicating an ongoing engagement and alignment of their leadership identity in their practice. For example, ensuring the consistency in teaching materials by providing feedback to their colleagues reflects their engagement and alignment.

Moreover, all three participants’ leadership practice is different to participants in Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) whereby those participants discussed leadership at the institutional level, whereas participants in this trajectory focus more on the leadership of courses at a school level. This indicates a variety of leadership practice of an older academic.

*Engaged and imagined researcher.*

All three participants moved from a practice-based research sector role to one in HE. They gradually picked up multiple course leadership responsibilities as indicated in table 4.3. In their previous roles, they considered themselves practice-based researchers, for which they were recognised in their fields. However, similarly to participants in Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) they have little time for their research. This is evidenced below,
Less frequent is taking time to do research, publishing, some concentrated data analysis […] That is a huge luxury for me when I get time to do that sort of thing. So sometimes you hit clashes between very heavy demands on different fronts at the same time. [Ian]

Ian’s account illustrates the clashes he felt between his identity as a teacher and as a researcher. Although Table 4.3 indicates engagement with a plethora of research tasks and projects, their research practice is pushed out by time demands of their teaching and leadership practice. All three academics highlight how little time they had to publish and engage with research. However, they still found research important, and they felt conflicted about not being able to further develop this identity. They imagine, engage, and identify themselves as researchers, even though in fact they have little time to engage with it. The fact that they hope to focus on their research when they have the time to do so, indicates the passions they feel for research. This attitude is similar to Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe). Resolving the tensions of not having enough time was only possible by focusing on the occasional opportunity they have and an envisaged future offering more flexibility. By talking about research, they felt they would like to align their academic practice to fulfil the component of being a researcher, as they felt it was part of being an academic.

It is here that the subtle differences and challenges in positioning participants on the continuum between engaged and unengaged is illuminated. On one hand, in contrast to Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma), Ian’s discipline allows him to dip in and out of his research whenever he is afforded the time to do so, thus he is not an unengaged researcher like Matt and Emma. On the other hand, Ian like Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) engages with research occasionally. Thus, he is not unengaged in the practice. He is neither in full sense of the definitions. In result, this example highlights the need to see these modes of identification on a continuum that are always dynamic.
4.3 Chapter conclusions

This chapter addressed research question RQ1. In what ways is academics' practice shaped by older academics' individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice? The trajectories above highlight that an academic identity is complex and encompasses different sub-identities (for instance: a teacher, an institutional leader, a teaching leader, a researcher). These sub-identities have additional layers of complexity when analysed through Wenger's notions of alignment, imagination and engagement and expanded by unengagement, unalignment and unimagination. They are fluid and can discontinue or continue but in less engaged forms. The trajectories presented answer the question about how older academics come to certain roles and what this means for their identity. Their previous experiences and current practice highlight six trajectories that reflect the development of different practices and thus the enactment of identities. Each trajectory has a particular focus on one or two dimensions of academic practice. For example, participants in Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) focus on their engagement and development of researcher and institutional leader practice, which is different to, for example, participants in Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) whose focus on tasks and project developing teaching practice. Consequently, each trajectory represents a unique identity trajectory for the participants whereby their individual sub-identities indicate the focus of their current practice and participants' motivations and values of how they see their future.

Given the wealth of experience and various roles across the landscape of their practice, the findings indicate the mature age of the participants. Focusing on the older academics above 50 years old mean that, participants have had time and space to participate across the landscape of various academic practices. These resulted in focusing on the enactment of some identities over others. For example Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) on institutional leadership, whilst Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) and Ian on teaching and leadership in teaching. To understand the landscape of older academics' practice, we need to distinguish individual identity trajectories, which in this study were highlighted as six distinct types. Given the changing and dynamic nature of their practice, the section indicated that participants within different trajectories experience clashes and tensions when met with the institutional or sector demands. For example,
participants in the Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) discussed the tensions they felt when their leadership practice, took over the time to develop their researcher practice.

Furthermore, across several trajectories (Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma), Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar), Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) where they had no time for research, participants felt this was missing from their practice, therefore they were interpreted as imagined researcher rather than engaged researchers. They felt uneasy not to be able to develop their research practice, however due to other commitments related to their either teaching or leadership identity, they struggled for time, being able to occasionally focus on theoretical research.

Moreover, the data suggests a nuanced picture when comparing teacher and leadership identity to an imagined researcher identity. Although all participants talked about the commitments they felt to students, indicating imagined teacher identity, they were less vocal about wanting to do more teaching. The intensity of longing to be a researcher was noticeably stronger than wanting to be a teacher, who (in this particular context of the MET University) create and chair courses. A role of a teacher in other HEI is usually different as academics are involved in blended or face to face teaching that could have a bearing on the results in this study.

Above all, the purpose of presenting the trajectories with selected quotes from the participants was to epitomise their positions. For example, Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) exemplifies that both academics focus on their leadership practice, even though they would like to be able to go back to research. Whereas in contrast, Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) epitomises an academic whose focal point in his practice is research, whereas leadership and teaching are something he has to do. These representations of focus within an identity trajectory gently introduces the agency element, that will be discussed in the following findings Chapter 5 The interplay of affordances and agency shaping older academic’s identities. Furthermore, presenting trajectories indirectly introduced institutional and discipline affordances that had an impact on these trajectories. For example, Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison) exemplified a participant whose pursuit of a more senior leadership role was restricted due to her lack of
doctoral qualification. Whereas in Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar), the participant talked about the need to align his current research practice to fit with the MET's current research trends. Consequently, these subtle introductory dynamics justify the need for the second findings chapter on affordances and agency that will elaborate on these tensions in more detail.

The following chapter discusses participants' affordances that enabled or restricted the development of their identities as well as how individual academics respond to those affordances given their agency.
5 The interplay of affordances and agency shaping older academic's identities

As argued in the literature chapter 2, identity development is a social and context-dependent construct. Context refers to workplace, and the wider disciplinary and external contexts of the academics. Thus, both the context and the way that individuals make sense of this context, should be examined when investigating identity (Billett, 2001).

In 2.3.2.1, I argued that affordances for participation are understood as social and cultural contexts, encompassing both material and interactional constructs and interpreted as resources or constraints shaping participants' identities (Bryson et al., 2006). Affordances to participate are shaped by various factors, such as work role, group affiliations, cultural practices, hierarchies, age, and personal relations (Billett, 2004a). The interviews and observations of the participants offered insights into settings that both offered a range of participatory opportunities, and those that did not. However, the descriptions of affordances suggested by the data were much more nuanced than simply the enablers or barriers in participation opportunities. Affordances needed to be understood as preconditions for individuals' engagement with the available activities and practices. Both whether and how individuals engage with activities and interactions afforded by their workplace depend on their agency to participate in demanding activities. The way in which individuals' exercise their personal agency is strongly aligned to their professional identities and subjectivities (Billett, 2006).

In chapter 2.3.2, I argued that individuals are not helpless hostages to the affordances and constraints of their practice, but they manage their engagement. In this way, individuals shape important aspects of their identity trajectories. I argued that, Billett’s (2001, 2004a,b,c, 2008) focus on ways individuals engage with affordances of the workplace is crucial in promoting the growth and development of the identities of individuals. Thus, it seems that
agency is implicated in the renegotiation of work identities and the continuous development of workplace practices. Subject-centred socio-cultural approaches suggest a need to integrate both the individual and the social contributions to agency, if we are to understand the remaking of work practices and identities at work (Billett, 2011; Eteläpelto et al., 2013).

Therefore, in describing affordances, this chapter also focuses on agency. Agency is conceptualised as being exercised when one acts intentionally, exercises control, and thus has an effect on their professional identity, work, working environment, and professional development (Eteläpelto et al., 2014). Apart from individual agency, the findings also revealed instances of collective agency. Therefore, the analysis considers both individual and collective agency in shaping one’s identity. Collective agency refers to the idea of a group of people sharing and pursuing a common interest in order to improve their own lives and to affect larger contexts (Eteläpelto et al., 2014; Vähäsanant, 2017).

This chapter therefore combines the findings of the two dimensions: affordances and agency. Presenting findings by combining results on affordances and agency in this way assumes that they are interdependent and so we cannot logically separate them. Thus, this chapter presents the findings to two RQs:

- Research question 2: How do the affordances available to older academics' practice shape their identity trajectory?
- Research question 3: How does the individual agency of older academic’s impact on their identity trajectory?

The findings report on the data analysis based on two of the themes, which were presented in Table 3.6. Final themes and associated sub-themes. These were: theme 2, organisational and disciplinary affordances, and theme 3, individual qualities. Out of those two broad themes five subsections are presented below.

First, Academic freedom as an affordance and agency. This section describes how the MET afforded a degree of academic freedom. The section reports on the way in which this condition impacts on developing researcher identity, whereas teachers’ identity seems more restricted to course design. The analysis includes academics’ manifestation of agency in
making individual choices regarding their research and teaching practices. Also, taking advantage of flexibility in terms of working patterns highlighted both strong identification but also disidentification of the participants from their faculties.

Second, **Recognition as an affordance and agency.** Being recognised creates opportunities for further engagement but also reaffirms academics identities, as they exercise their agency by responding to the request. This section also reports on the affordance to delegate some of the participants workload to focus on a particular identity trajectory. The data also suggests that recognition for practice development can differ from one faculty to the next at the MET and the wider disciplinary community. This section has a particular resonance with older academics, as recognition seem to be earned through a prolonged engagement in their practice.

Third, **Collaborative practice as an affordance and agency.** This section presents the nature of participants’ practice which fosters identity development through collaborative learning. The section explores teaching practices which necessitate collaboration, research as both collaborative and individual activity, and leadership which is scaffolded by collaboration. Furthermore, networking in this section is discussed as an affordance which might lead to collaboration. Brokering is presented as opportunities for academics to engage in new projects themselves but also in order to influence other people’s work.

The penultimate section covers **The affordance of time to reflect.** This section has also a particular relevance given the age and a long working experience of the participants. The section outlines how time to reflect and learn on the job develops practice and related identities.

The final section reports on **Values and motivations.** The manifestation of agency was related to participants’ but also institutional values, motives, and interests. The data reports on commitments to students and social justice, public debate but also issues related to identity in responding to a top-down reforms affecting participants’ practice.
These broad themes and sub-themes will be discussed in turn with a conclusion at the end of each theme and a final conclusion at the end of the chapter. The evidence will be presented in two forms, as extracts from the interviews, as well as using observational vignettes.

5.1 Academic freedom as an affordance and agency

The first theme, and most frequently occurring in the data, was academic freedom. Winter (2009) reminds us of the long tradition of autonomy and academic freedom and identifies them as essential elements of academic and university identity. Academic freedom is expressed in the ability of individuals to autonomously act to effect change (Molla and Nolan, 2020). As an affordance, academic freedom is understood here as the ability to direct one’s teaching and research practices within the constraints of institutional structures, the policies of the university, and wider disciplinary conventions.

Most of the participants described their practice using the term freedom, as exemplified below:

‘I have an extraordinary freedom.’ [Alan]
‘... that's where the freedom comes.’ [Alison]
‘I have almost total freedom.’ [Eva]

Two distinct sub-themes in academic freedom were: freedom in the tasks and projects engaged with and freedom in their work location.

5.1.1 Freedom in pursuing research and the constraints of teaching responsibilities

First, academic freedom allowed participants to shape the tasks and projects they engaged with. There were two areas of participants’ practice where academic freedom was discussed: research and teaching. Eva's extracts summarise the findings concerning the subtle difference between how research and course production is different in terms of academic freedom:
Certainly, in research I have almost total freedom. The teaching side, within parameters there’s a lot of freedom. [Eva]

Eva’s comments were shared by other participants when it came to research. Academics appreciated the freedom to pursue their own research interests as opposed to their teaching practice, and in particular course creation, where there was only a certain amount of freedom.

When considering teaching practice, the respondents said that there is freedom in deciding on the specifics of pedagogy, content, or learning activities for students. The below quotation by Ian exemplifies this concept:

> When it comes to the specifics I suggested a case study, and the course team accepted it. So, there’s still quite a bit of freedom within teaching as well to teach what you want, but also to teach it in a particular way as well, I think. So, there’s freedom there. [Ian]

Ian’s comment is representative of others, whose trajectories encompassed teaching practice: Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva). Ian talks about the freedom he feels he has in suggesting methods and teaching techniques. Although, he refers to the course team that must decide whether those suggestions are appropriate, he feels the freedom in suggesting the changes and new ideas in the first place. In this way, time was an affordance, which influenced what individuals considered was practical and feasible within their environment (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015).

Fred further elaborated on organisational factors and individual practice and priorities, which shaped academic freedom:

> Well, I think in most academic roles there’s an element of people defining their own workload and priorities, but obviously with a quite close collaboration with line managers who are keeping an eye on things. [Fred]
Negotiating time dedicated to different areas of participants’ practice was again a shared experience of all respondents across all trajectories. Eva’s comment above indicates explicitly that both research and course production were taken into consideration, whereas Fred discussed this issue in broader terms as needing negotiation with his line manager. These findings stress that positive relationships with managers are critical in the enactment of the agency by changing practice, involving negotiation and deviating from the official role and workload distribution to focus on the area of interest for the participant.

Fred’s quote also indicated that the time allocated puts a timeframe on various aspects of participants' practice. Time here is conceptualised as dependent on the temporal complexities evident within a socio-environment (Adam, 2013). Such conceptualisation highlights the influence of material factors, such as time allocation, on the practical-evaluative dimension of an academic’s agency within the affordances of academic freedom.

The example below shows how time is allocated to an academic's work:

> Every year we have academic workload management, and that's when you'll talk with your head of discipline about the jobs that you're going to do the next year. And they'll say to you well I can give you 30 days for this job, 40 days for that job, 10 days for this job. But you can negotiate. [Adam]

Adam’s example demonstrates that, for most academics, their time is allocated to various parts of their practice without being explicit about what percentage is related to which practice. The university structure allows freedom to determine the organization and specifics of their research practice and the pedagogical approach of their teaching practice. Adam's excerpt is an example of time division. Other academics also spoke of different time allocation, however without being as explicit as Adam.

The findings so far outlined that academic freedom in research and teaching was twofold. The overall time allocation for the time academics spent within research was negotiated. Teaching however was more restrictive, although the specifics of the discipline and some aspects of pedagogy were left to decide. Overall, having the freedom to pursue the research
area they are interested in is significant for participants pursuing Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar). Whereas less freedom in producing courses does not impact or compromise participants’ teacher identity for Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva), because as the data above suggests, the issue is as much about how they teach rather than what they teach.

5.1.1.1 Research contexts

So far, this section has highlighted that, participants negotiated time for certain activities within the parameters of their contractual obligations and institutional frameworks. These parameters were necessary conditions for academic work and, therefore, the conditions in which their academic identity was grounded.

Examples of individual agency also manifested in academics’ influence over their research projects in terms of methods, content and which grants they bid for. Nearly all the academics in this study were engaged in individual research projects (ten participants out of eleven), and they were largely able to determine the means, methods and objectives of their research. This is exemplified by Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar):

... we do have freedom to decide what we're going to research and what grants we're going to apply for and so on. [Omar]

Omar’s views were shared by both participants in Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred). Similarly, participants in trajectories 2 Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher [Emma, Matt]; Trajectory 5: Teacher [Zoe, Lucy] and 6: Teacher and Institutional Leader [Eva, Adam, Ian] expressed a high degree of agency in dictating the content and direction of their research plans regardless of the time they had available for their research, as exemplified by Eva’s comments below:

So, I can decide what to write about, where to place it, so that's very free I think the research side. [Eva]
The ability to design and carry out their research according to their professional expertise evidenced the connection between academic freedom and their agency. At the same time, despite participants discussing agency in their research practice, those whose trajectories were primarily concerned with the development of research identities suggested some external expectations they felt in relation to what they spent time on. This was reflected by Alan’s quote below:

I have time for research and there is expectation that I might go and find funding for that. As long as it is broadly related to the faculty and there is a good chance to be published in a high ranked journal and I am bringing some research income... You know other people might expect other conversations with someone if I am not producing research outputs, if I am not getting any research funding. And the conversation might go along the lines of we might get better use of your capabilities by having you put your research effort into a scholarship of teaching and learning... But in my case this is not the conversation that is likely to happen. I am one of the better research performers in the faculty. [Alan]

Alan’s quote above is comparable to two other participants whose main focus in their practice is on research. These are Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar). Although these academics were free to pursue research which they felt passionate about, they were expected to bring in funding and publish in high-ranking journals. There were no differences across faculties in the findings. Therefore, while participants were able to find agency and freedom in the topics of their research, they were still subject to external pressures that guided their courses of action. Alan’s quote implies that, potentially for line management purposes, not succeeding in publications and securing funding meant that academics at the MET would be required to spend more of their time on teaching projects. Thus, the agency to advance in research was also dependent on bringing in funding and producing publications by those academics. Consequently, the participants perceived that they had considerable freedom to develop research practices, but this does not mean that they could do whatever they wanted as they had to be strategic in bidding and their choice of research activities. The need to remain
conscious about successful outputs could be seen as a constraint on their agency. Thus, the enactment of agency is clearly interrelated with affordances. The MET afforded participants freedom in their research, however the affordance also embedded the institutional goals and practices in the form of tangible research outputs.

Alan’s quote above also offers an insight into participants exercising agency in relation to being recognised by others. Being recognised is conceptualised here as being competent and understanding the rules of the community that enable the agency to participate in that domain (Wenger, 1998). The findings highlighted that such recognition allowed participants to start new projects they felt there was a need for. Alan was able to persevere with his research interests as he was recognised by the wider disciplinary community as well as the MET for his inputs into his discipline. He called himself “one of the better research performers” and that gave him the currency to continue to agentically pursue his research interests. This understanding of recognition as an affordance will be returned to in section 5.2

5.1.2 Freedom in hybrid working

A second view of academic freedom was referred to in terms of flexible working conditions. The academics described flexibility in choosing the frequency with which they work from the office or home. The freedom in choosing to work from home was driven by the type of tasks participants were engaged with. All participants cited better concentration when working from home, whereas working from the office was mainly dedicated to meetings and collaboration with others. Examples provided by Alan and Emma represented participants’ feelings towards flexible working patterns:

If I require sustainable thinking or sustainable concentration, whether this is for research or teaching materials or writing a report for my [current role], then I may well work at home. If I am needing to interact with people quite a lot, then I am working at the university. [Alan]
So, when I do research I don't do that here in the office. I just can't concentrate enough to be able to do that. But I can read papers for meetings, write emails and all that kind of stuff. [Emma]

Both quotes are reflective of several other participants across all trajectories who discussed the affordance of freedom that enabled them to work flexibly to maximise their work outcomes. This was in particularly true when it came to their research activities and working on course content that requires them to focus and thus have no distractions. This suggests that engaging with their work and continuing to develop their teaching and research area identities means the participants required an affordance of flexible working patterns.

Although course production, seeing doctorate students, leadership tasks and collaborative projects involve an abundance of meetings, participants talked about exercising their choice to attend these online. In fact, during most of my observations, when participants attended meetings, frequently, the participants or other members of the meetings were joining online. Being free to choose to work from home or the office meant the participants were trusted to manage the pattern of their own working life and priorities. For some, it was a matter of quality of life and a reward of an academic career. For instance, Alison below talks about how her role fits with the family life:

I had a young family and that's more important to me. The role of the [...] worked based from home, meant I could have a lot of flexibility, great deal of flexibility. As my child grew older then yes, I had more time to spend in academia, and it's actually a very cushy [comfortable] environment in which to work, an extremely cushy environment in which to work. You have a huge amount of flexibility. [Alison]

Alison talked about her previous roles at the MET that allowed her to combine her family life with the requirements of her work. Her comments were representative of two other female participants [Zoe, Lucy] who discussed the importance of work flexibility in balancing work and family life. All these participants recognised the value of an academic role in combining an identity of an academic with one of a parent. Thus, flexibility of working from home and balancing with the family life have implications for the development of academic practice.
Working in an environment that provides that affordance to have such flexibility, allows participants maintain their identities of parents while developing their professional identities.

Although the workplace culture enabled participants to work flexibly, several participants choose to work from the office as they felt this provides them with better participation and communication with their colleagues. Two colleagues in particular, discussed their preference for working from their workplace instead of at home. Both examples came from colleagues encompassing leadership identities, Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison):

It’s much easier to be here. I mean yes we have Skype, so I have a fellow associate dean who is a home worker, who attends quite a lot of meetings via Skype, but even she’s finding it’s easier to be here. Because you have those informal conversations as well, so a lot of business is conducted in the hub, as opposed to formal meetings. So you bump into people, which as a home worker, as a remote worker you don’t do. [Alison]

I think it’s much easier to engage when you’re actually there in person, especially if everybody else, or if most other people are there in person. Otherwise you get problems, like the one we’ve had earlier with Skype or links. I think also I like to talk to people and see them, it’s important. [Emma]

Both participants commented on the advantage of coming into the workplace to have informal conversations with their colleagues. Also, they both felt better informed and engaged with their faculties by physically seeing their colleagues. Both participants, without being explicit, referred to their leadership practice as involving regular meetings. A physical presence for them enabled a personal connection with their colleagues and reduced distractions.

In Emma’s quote above she also highlighted technical issues such as poor connections or challenges in opening links as a challenge to successful online meetings. Other participants described similar frustrations related to their colleagues joining meetings online:
I mean, these days a lot of interaction is online and you know people, you meet them, but very often one is operating with the virtues and the limitations of email. And I wouldn't say that's an inhibition, but it perhaps does lead to a certain kind of fairly sort of nuts-and-bolts interaction. [Fred]

In contrast to the quotes above from Emma and Alison, who described being at the campus frequently to afford engagement with their colleagues on a less formal level, Fred talked about the culture of the MET as being distant and business like; online connection with colleagues did not allow for the types of conversations one might have while bumping into someone at a coffee shop in the campus. Although Fred did not perceive this as a constraint in engagement with his colleagues, he recognised that such participation is a change from previous norms. He accepted the change with its consequences which had become an everyday practice. In contrast to Fred, Lucy discussed the disconnection she felt from her faculty caused by the online nature of the MET.

We don't feel like we are part of a faculty really. So easily as what other universities are doing where they regularly meet one another in corridors. I mean during an assembly meeting there was no one else in my office at all... Apart from the people that I work immediately with whom I work in a very similar fashion to me, I don't really know how other people work. I did work as part of a huge team in my previous post 3 years ago or 4 years ago something like that. I worked in a big team to create master courses, and I just had one small unit to write as part of the enormous team. but I have no idea how everybody else worked, any model on how this should be constructed I knew what it should be about so I did what I thought was right. [Lucy]

Lucy’s comments were representative of the other participant from Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe). Comparing the culture of other universities, Lucy’s lonely experiences at the MET illuminated her dissatisfaction of the way her colleagues choose to engage with each other, given the affordances of working from home. Identifying with her faculty and engaging with her colleagues was important for her, yet creating connections was challenging as it relied on other colleagues’ physical presence. She implied that for her, a sense of community had not
yet developed. Furthermore, Lucy's account highlighted the challenges of sharing practice as she did not know what other colleagues were doing. The affordance of working from home created pockets of teams that worked together, yet they were not communicating with others to engage with other teams on their practices. Being restricted in the practice development to small groups affected the development of participants’ identities, as they are not able to evaluate their practice compared to other colleagues apart from those in their teams. In this context, the affordance of academic freedom to work remotely created a barrier for Lucy and the other two participants [Fred, Zoe] who shared their experiences of struggling to imagine themselves as a part of a faculty. The notion of unimagination was discussed earlier in section 4.2.

5.1.3 Conclusion to subsection

In conclusion, this subsection reported the dynamics of academic freedom about participants’ tasks and projects they could pursue. The overall allocation for the time academics spent within research and teaching practices was negotiated. Academics exercised their agency in what they research, although they were required to ensure sufficient publication records and securing funding bids. On the other hand, for teaching duties they could decide on some aspects of pedagogy in course content. The freedom in negotiating working patterns and working arrangements highlighted the challenging nature of the online institution, impacting both the quality of collegiate connections the participants felt as a result of working from home.

The next section discusses a second theme, the most described theme by participants.

5.2 Recognition as an affordance and agency

Recognition as an affordance is a sub-theme of particular relevance in the context of this study as it links to the age of the participants. As older academics they had to work intensively for a sustained and long period of time to earn that recognition from others. In chapter two I argued that the development of an academic identity is defined by how the individual is perceived by the community (Leibowitz, et.al, 2014). Academic identities are
constructed by the academic themselves, whereby they identify with certain practice but are also identified by others and their different (disciplinary, research, teaching, or professional) communities. Academics need to engage with the community. Through this engagement their disciplinary identity is developed, acquires definition, and socially legitimated (Leibowitz et al., 2014). In this way, an expert identity must be recognised by the group members, which in turn reflects onto how academics understand themselves and their areas of expertise. Several distinct subsections related to recognition as an affordance were distinguished. First, recognition creates an opportunity for further engagement and learning opportunities. Second, agentic moves facilitate academics in responding to these opportunities. The subsequent subsections outline how recognition may form a barrier or an opportunity for securing a new role. The final subsection, focuses on the affordance of being able to delegate, based on academics’ senior and recognised roles. The affordance of recognition was noted to be interrelated with the participants’ enactments of agency in responding to these opportunities to further develop their identity trajectories.

5.2.1 Recognition creates opportunities for further engagement and reaffirms identity trajectories

As established above, participants had substantial previous experience and developed their practice, thus enacting their respective identities over many years. The findings show that all participants established an academic identity and, in particular, a disciplinary identity. Part of this identity was the recognition by their colleagues of some aspects of their practice over the years. This recognition was based on either: their teaching expertise, their research expertise, or their HE leadership. By expertise, I mean the knowledge and skills that one must have to be recognised by others as knowledgeable in their practice in their given field. The affordance of recognition, based on participants’ experience and contributions as perceived by their peers, is conceptualised here as an enabler for other affordances, such as a conference invitation to give a keynote.

The expertise of several participants was valued and frequently utilised by others in course production. For example, Vignette 1 below demonstrates how Lucy (Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) was recognised as a “safe pair of hands” by her course production colleagues.
during an observation of a course production meeting. Being recognised for her teaching expertise was evidenced in the teaching teams she regularly worked with.

Vignette 1 Lucy’s F2F course team meeting

Lucy’s observation

Lucy was observed during a face-to-face meeting with a team discussing course content production. The purpose of the meeting was to review various sections of the course and for the team to agree what changes should be made and who was going to make them. Lucy was not involved in all sections of the course. During the meeting Lucy was asked by another team member to take on a new section which she agreed to. After the meeting Lucy said:

Well, because I wasn't involved in the first section, I didn't expect that I may have to do anything with it. But it turns out I did... I am known for helping out when needed. I have very fixed ideas on what constitutes good writing, and they tend to rely on me to say what about the students and things like that? You know, so that gives them the freedom to think about other ideas because they know I will drive them back if necessary and from my point of view. I am a [discipline] specialist."

In this example, Lucy's reputation for helping others meant that she was asked to work on a new section of a course by her course colleagues, which she agreed to. Her expertise meant that she was able to pick up work. Given the way Lucy’s colleague promptly identified her as someone who can help, it seems that her colleagues knew she would be happy to develop the new section and knew that this would be of good quality. Being recognised by her colleagues for her expertise in an area provided her with an affordance to exercise agency in choosing to engage with a new section in a course. Having that opportunity and agency can be seen as an enactment of her identity as a skilled author of course material. Being in a recognised position meant that her experience and knowledge were assets that could be capitalised on by her colleagues. Apart from the possibility for Lucy to engage with a new
section in a course, that led to the consolidation of her identity as a teacher. The vignette also highlighted Lucy’s agency in deciding to work on the new section as she enjoyed working with her team. The dynamics of maintaining friendships as a way of enacting professional agency for engagement in a new project was predicated upon a mutual valuing of each other’s expertise, and thus participants’ identities. Being asked to engage with a new section was an affirmation of Lucy’s expertise and position but could also be seen as Lucy’s desire to maintain personal relationships by responding positively to requests for assistance. This vignette will also be referred when discussing an affordance for collaborative practice in the sub section: Delegating 5.2.5

5.2.2 Being able to respond to requests

The affordance of recognition in the quotes above was interlinked with the agency of being able to respond to these opportunities, when participants were asked to share their knowledge and expertise. These were: giving lectures [Omar, Alan, Fred, Eva, Adam]; commenting on other people’s publications [Alan, Zoe, Matt, Adam, Ian]; international events, think tanks [Omar, Alan, Matt]; responding to offers of new projects [Omar, Matt].

Thus, responding to these requests reaffirmed their identity but also highlighted their agency in being able to respond to these requests. The participants made choices in responding and sharing their expertise. This enactment of agency represents past and continuing contributions to one’s field that are evident in publications, citations, papers, curriculum materials and events the participants are invited to (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011).

The following section focuses on how being recognised provided opportunities related to offers of new employment.

Being able to respond to the requests of others, whilst also influencing and negotiating new directions within their faculties, was noted during observations of two participants whose trajectories encompassed institutional leadership [Alison, Emma]. Below in Vignette 2 is presented to exemplify the agentic influences within leadership practice in responding to requests.
Vignette 2. Alison’s F2F faculty meeting

Alison’s faculty meeting

Aim and Atmosphere: The aim of the meeting was to meet up regularly to provide updates, discuss progress and any issues that may arise in the faculty. Alison being in a position of a leader of the faculty hopes to alter the vision of the faculty in new projects and initiatives to improve the ways of the faculty.

Alison was chairing the meeting, however throughout the meeting, apart from direct questions to specific members of the meeting, Alison encouraged open discussions and invited others to interrupt. This behaviour was particularly evident when questions needed to be raised and concerns voiced, as she explained new changes that she would like to see. She highlighted if any decisions were agreed by all participants in the room, expressing concern and making sure that everyone’s opinion was taken into consideration.

When other participants of the meeting were giving updates, Alison asked additional questions for clarification.

When several requests were raised in terms of training colleagues who were involved in the initiative, Alison was quick to respond that she was able to offer necessary training and people resources to support the colleagues that were struggling. She explained she was able to make that decision as she made inquiries earlier about whether the training would be available and whether additional colleagues would be able to help out when necessary. Her planning was greatly appreciated by others.

After the meeting Alison concluded:

It helps that I know the participants. I know where they’re coming from. I have a good understanding of what we’re trying to achieve, and I made sure in the initial meetings that everybody bought into that vision.
In Vignette 2, Alison’s participation in the meeting was carefully planned and prepared before her meeting with colleagues. Alison’s intention was for her colleagues to be open to new visions of the faculty’s direction. Being in the position of a leader, Alison took a stance in how she saw the changes and made careful decisions in how she would go about it by involving, consulting and collaborating with her colleagues about those changes. She was able to respond to requests by offering additional help and resources that she had anticipated prior the meeting. She understood her colleague’s motivations and, by making choices and negotiation, she enacted her agency in applying new ideas in the faculty. By being able to respond to the requests of her colleagues Alison reaffirmed her identity as a leader of the faculty that listens to, and facilitates, other people’s needs when possible. The enactment of agency by Alison in this context to influence and negotiate a new vision for the faculty, focused on the collaboration and preparation of the participant to respond to possible requests and needs of her colleagues. Furthermore, Alison used her position and was able to organize and influence others to participate in learning opportunities. This vignette was similar to a meeting between Emma and her colleagues.

This subsection established that participants across all identity trajectories enacted their agency by responding to requests of others. These requests were connected to the affordances offered when others in the setting recognised the participant. Alison made a choice to listen and consider other colleagues and to provide the support they asked for. Equally she was able to do so, based on her senior leadership position. Hence, the affordance of being a leader, creates the opportunity for the participant to have the choice to respond to the requests of others. Similarly, participants were able to enact their agency in responding to collaborative offers of publications, giving talks and participation in new course creation, were able to do so based on their recognised positions. Participants who are not recognised by their colleagues or a wider research community would not get an invite to participate. This is the same as a colleague who does not have an experience in course creation, not being asked to engage in it.
5.2.3 Being recognised offers new job opportunities

Several participants discussed how the affordance of recognition by employers provided them with an opportunity to secure a new role. Participants discussed new roles as a key aspect of the recognition of their expertise. The examples noted were both within researcher and leader identity trajectories. Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison). For Alan, this opportunity was based on his management and leadership experience, which allowed him to challenge another colleague at a similar position, as illustrated below:

I was sat down in the office and [dean] said you are currently in this role I need someone who can stand up to [person e] so I am going to construct a new role for you which includes that sector. [Alan]

Alan was recognised for his skills to challenge difficult colleagues; his reputation meant his manager created a role for him to allow him to engage with the difficult colleague in question. He was recognised as being able to deal with difficult circumstances, which led to him being afforded with the promotion.

For Matt, promotion was based on his research and teaching contributions, whereby an external person approached him to offer him a role:

And then in [event] [a person] approached me and offered me a professorship in [named discipline] as I had lots of publications and practical experience [Matt]

In addition to discussion on new institutional roles, respondents described how they were occasionally headhunted for different roles within the external private and HE sectors. These examples illuminated that being recognised meant being offered new job opportunities, which in turn meant developing their external identities, resulting in recognition by others. There was no data on similar affordances in relation to teaching identity trajectories; for Matt, recognition of his skills related to his identity as a research professor, whereas for Alan the recognition meant a development of a leadership identity.
Moreover, one academic talked about how his professorial status meant he was heard by the faculty leadership:

Sometimes some of the work I do feels like a faculty needs someone like a broken record about certain issues and people do tend to listen to me. So, if there is someone like me, like professors in the faculty saying it tends to have a bit more impact than if it's from central of the university. [Alan]

Alan’s quote was reflective of two other participants who were professors [Matt] and [Emma] who talked about their senior roles having more impact on what they can drive forward in the faculty agenda. Having the recognised identity as a professor and a senior role of an Associate Dean meant they were also relied upon by their faculty to engage with the pressing issues of their faculties. Hence, their engagement in certain activities was almost expected, as they were recognised as leaders in their faculties.

5.2.4 Selective recognition

Whilst engagement in practice can lead to a productive relationship between identity and practice development, it can also have the opposite effect; for instance, when an individual engages in practice, they may feel marginalised or conflicted, as Wenger (1998) has pointed out. Henkel (2000, 2005) noted that it is generally assumed that the discipline is central in the academic’s construction of an academic identity. Still, while academics may feel they contribute to their community in one sense, as evidenced above (e.g., by successfully publishing in a particular field, being invited to a conference), in another academic context, they may find themselves at the margins, due to the type of academic work or expertise that their institutions value. An account of Omar features the participants’ struggles in being recognised for their discipline within the MET:

I was the very first person in the world to research this subject the way I did, and I had no trouble disseminating my work and getting my first book published and I got that published within two years of joining the MET, but still I’m not getting short-listed for permanent jobs at the MET. So, this was something I had to deal with. So, I carried on
working in that area, publishing on [discipline], and just basically keeping my head
down, trying not to make mistakes, and trying to do a good job and be seen to do a
good job. Eventually landed a permanent role. [Omar]

Omar’s identity was recognised in his disciplinary circles by being able to disseminate his
work, yet he struggled to secure a permanent position within his faculty. To ensure
continuous employment at the MET, the participant focused on other aspects of practice that
were required of him without giving much detail as to what they were. Yet, despite this split
of recognition, it did not seem to have an impact on the continuous engagement of the
participant with the discipline. In consequence, Omar’s quote indicates a continuous agency
in pursuing the discipline, despite disappointment and a lack of institutional affordance of
permanent employment at the MET.

5.2.5 Delegating

This subsection adds to the theme of recognition by focusing on the ‘privileges’ of the
participants based on their recognised position, which can also mean a senior position. This
subsection is about the affordance of delegating related to one’s position within the MET,
and how participants enacted their agency in delegating some of their projects to others to
manage their engagement in practice.

For several participants, making a choice to delegate was dictated by a clash of several events
occurring at the same time. This is exemplified by Alan:

We’ve got one conference at an international organisation to try to build relationships
with the organisations around the world. This year is in [country] but it, unfortunately,
clashes with the [network] that I prefer to attend, So I am sending a colleague of mine
instead. He has had an involvement with them in the past so he knows them and I am
going to encourage him to develop a relationship with them. [Alan]

Alan mentioned delegating conference attendance to his colleague as he preferred to attend
a different event. Alan’s enactment of agency means that his colleague gets the opportunity
to go to the event, trusting that the colleague will be capable of cultivating relationships as he dealt with the organisation previously. In this case, the choice to delegate the task opened an opportunity for someone else to engage with an event. Alan’s example was echoed by other participants encompassing leadership identity trajectories Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison)Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva), whereby the participants used their senior role to influence the projects/events they could miss by sending someone else instead. In being able to make requests to others, participants used the influence of their relationships and status to free them up from certain projects to benefit their engagement with preferred projects.

Alison in the quote below summarises her view on delegating work to others.

> There are areas where I am mature and sensible enough to realise other people have greater skills, and so I would delegate that responsibility to individuals who enjoy that type of work but whilst retaining an overall sense of direction. Because with age comes the experience of knowing you can’t do it all yourself. So it’s about harnessing others and making sure that they have opportunities to shine. And a very wise leader doesn’t do it all themselves, they let other people do it. [Alison]

Alison’s choice to delegate is driven by her belief in harnessing other people’s potentials and interests when working on a mutual project. When being able to delegate, the enactment of agency was expressed in being able to solicit and receive participation from individuals in their work to enhance the practice of the faculty.

Using their position, academics were able to organize and influence others to participate in professional practice. Doing so, the participants potentially empower their colleagues, indicate their confidence in them and assist with opportunities for their professional development. Having the authority in exercising task delegation means the participants reinstate their identities as leaders and managers by trusting others and empowering them to undertake new tasks.
Moreover, the ability to exercise agency by delegating was related to their years of experience for some participants. This is exemplified by Eva’s quote below.

And I think over time I’ve become much better at delegating things. I think it took me a really long time to learn how to delegate because it always felt, I think particularly as you work in universities, everybody’s working really hard generally, so it’s very hard to ask somebody to do something because you’re giving them extra work most of the time. [Eva]

Eva talked about her experience in learning how to delegate. She felt uneasy about delegating because she recognised that it added more work to her colleagues who were already busy with their current projects. However, she understood that in her position being a leader necessitates enactment of agency by delegating. This quote also indicates a re-development of her identity, whereby given the time, she felt comfortable to delegate.

The agency enactment of delegation was interrelated with the participants’ years of experience, role seniority, and position within the MET. If participants were not in senior positions, they would not have the choice to delegate. Being in such positions enabled but also sometimes necessitated delegation, due to time constraints. The enactment of agency in delegating meant that participants were able to choose to engage with the practice they wanted, but also indicated confidence and trust towards their colleagues, reaffirming their leader and manager identities.

5.2.6 Conclusion to subsection

In summary, recognition as an affordance for identity development was an enabler for participants’ further development by: being invited to disseminate their expertise, being able to respond to give a keynote talk, and as an invitation to guide and collaborate with other colleagues. These affordances were available to them as they were approached by other colleagues in the MET or through their disciplinary networks. Recognition of their work was
also an enabler for work promotion, whereas the status of a professor meant decision-makers were more likely to listen to their voice. Furthermore, a nuanced picture of the affordance of recognition was noted when considering the development of the research identity of Omar; he was recognised by an external community while remaining unrecognised by his own employer. Thus, even though an affordance of recognition enables engagement in practice within one community, it may be constrained by another. This example of an affordance adds an extra layer to the conceptualisation of an affordance that is not just an enabler or an inhibitor but is dependent on the landscape of a participant’s various communities. It is also here that we can note how both theories used in this study complement each other. The participants exercised their agency by negotiating time to focus on the practice they felt passionate about. For those with researcher identities [Alan, Matt] this meant more focus on research projects, whilst for those with a clear teaching identity [Zoe], agency meant focusing on the courses they were particularly interested in.

5.3 Collaborative practice as an affordance and agency

Collaborative practice was also frequently mentioned in the interviews and noted in the observations; this sub theme offers an understanding of the participants' collaborative practice and identity enactment. Collaborative practice refers to an affordance that is shaped by relational dynamics across participants’ landscape of practice. As a community (even one that infrequently meets face-to-face due to geographic separation), academics engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, share information, and build relationships that enable them to learn from one another. The construction and development of identity include dimensions of mutual engagement and shared repertoires (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In the literature subsection (2.4.1) I argued that academics construct identities through engagement in a landscape of practice, which consists of several communities, such as their disciplinary community, departmental working group, and research team (Lankveld et al., 2017; Zukas and Malcolm, 2017). Trowler and Knight (2000) suggested that 'project identities' develop as academics become involved with a particular interest or research group. Engagement in these relational dynamics enabled or constrained the engagement of
participants with their colleagues, thus affording or not affording learning, which in turn developed or did not develop their identities.

In general, an earlier analysis of participant’s practices across all three areas of their practice reported several collaborative tasks and projects involving other colleagues. This was summarised in **Table 4.3. Participants’ current projects and tasks within their identity trajectories**. Five distinct sub sections related to the affordances of participants’ collaborative practice were identified. To start with, the findings outline that teaching practice necessitates collaboration (5.3.1). Research is outlined as an example of exercising individual and collective agency (5.3.2), whilst leadership is scaffolded by collaboration (5.3.3). Across all trajectories, participants recognised that their resourcefulness increased when working in a supportive and collegial environment, hence they were not only responding to but also seeking out collaboration. Finally networking (5.3.4) and brokering (5.3.1) were evidenced in the data, which also connects with senior role privileges particularly in leadership trajectories. Each will be reported in turn.

### 5.3.1 Teaching necessitates collaboration

There are lots of ways in which academics end up being involved in course creation, but the data showed that in the MET collaboration was key when putting a course together. Collaboration during course creation allowed participants to further develop their myriad of identities. Six respondents discussed the distinctive nature of collaborative course production as a joint effort between colleagues. In the example below, Adam referred to a team effort within a course production:

> We work in teams at the [MET], so when a course goes well, we take the accolades of team working. We don't produce courses on our own. If a course is well received it's because lots of people have made it that way, and not just the academics, the colleagues in [department], other colleagues as well. They've all helped to make it that way. [Adam]
This extract shows how individual effort is framed as a team effort to ensure the course is created. The environment where the courses are designed relies on collaboration, and participants would not be able to develop courses on their own.

Apart from the collaborative nature of producing a course, it is worth pointing out the division of labour within the team, the dynamics, and the tensions related to how a course is put together. The vignette below from Ian illustrates the dynamics of course production.

**Vignette 3. Ian's F2F team course production meeting**

Ian’s course team meeting

Environment: Face to face meeting in a room with seven members of the team around a table with one person attending online via Skype for Business. The person online participated at various stages of the meeting whether asked directly to participate or by commenting on what was currently discussed.

The members of the team included 4 academics, an e-Learning developer, a curriculum manager, and an IT technician.

The atmosphere was friendly and collegial.

Summary of the observation: Ian acted as a course team chair for the meeting. Throughout the meeting Ian and other participants discussed what the course’s purpose is and what needs to happen next. Ian suggested that all team members prepare an outline of content. He asked one of the academics to take a lead in producing an overall draft. The IT technician pointed out some glitches in the system when uploading video content with captions that the institution was grappling with, suggesting a time frame during which this should be resolved. One of the academics pointed out the necessary video length and the need for larger captions. Both agreed to find out more details about the specifications for the videos and communicate with the rest of the team.
Ian’s reflections after the meeting:
The purpose of the meeting was about the content for a new [...] course, putting together content for the [...] involves a lot of information from emerging issues covered by various stakeholders of the [MET] structure. The meeting thus was hoping to discuss who are the stakeholders, as the team was not sure and who makes the arrangements, decisions, etc. So, the aim of the meeting was to come together to work out how e-portfolio can be used. As not everyone understood what is involved, talking about pieces from various sides helps to get the participants to get their heads around what might be required. The meeting was an informal team that comes across to design the [...] course. There were action points that some people will have to follow up with. I became the chair as my role involves a qualification lead, so when I came back from sabbatical, I suggested to chair it and they all agreed.

The vignette above, similar to Vignette 1 of Lucy’s team meeting, illustrates the collaborative nature of a new course being created. Ian’s identity within the meeting is as a course team chair, thus he leads the meeting. He became the course chair as he was already qualification lead, which suggests that his role was a continuation of a process which he started before the meeting, having the agreement of other colleagues from the team. Thus, the affordance of the collaborative nature of course production enabled Ian to continue with a role he had experience of. Ian’s identity as a chair of a course was both an identity that was constructed through the experience he gained over the years, but also legitimised by other colleagues at his course team. This is similar to an identity of Lucy in Vignette 1, where she was not a course chair but a recognised colleague who could provide help by having her expertise and willingness to engage acknowledged by colleagues. Although the participants were on different identity trajectories, Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe), as opposed to Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva), observational data of their practice highlights how an affordance of a collaborative practice of putting courses together created opportunities for them both to further develop their respective trajectories. Being in positions of having previous experience and the trust of their colleagues also highlights the age of the participants. For the participants to have that experience and trust, they must have earned it over the years. Following the meeting illustrated in Vignette 3, Ian described influencing his
own work by applying new ideas, but also influencing his colleagues’ perceptions of the shared aims. The influence over others’ perceptions would subsequently shape their practice. This influence over others’ work was combined with a sense of satisfaction with the process of developing a collaborative project. The importance of leadership was connected to talking about making a meaningful contribution to the development, for example the use of e-portfolio in their current courses.

5.3.2 Collaborative research as an expression of individual and collective agency

Apart from collaboration with other educators, joint authorship of scientific research was mentioned by most of academics as a form of collaboration. Some participants felt particularly strongly about collaboration in research [Alan, Emma, Adam], as exemplified by Alan below:

Yeah, so in my research, it’s been over 10 years since I produced a single paper [authored alone]. So typically I am working in collaboration with people and it’s partly because I am very interested in doing work that crosses disciplinary boundaries so it’s always better to be working with other people in those circumstances because being able to have conversations between disciplinary boundaries isn’t too hard, but, with the aid of somebody else who knows that disciplinary area better than you then it’s possible to at least become an expert in some small portion of it. I am often approached by others to work together on various papers [Alan]

Joint publications and working together on research projects were how Alan understood and enacted agency in his research activity, which other respondents echoed. The importance of writing joint publications was widespread amongst other participants, where working together on research projects and writing held a meaningful place in their professional development. This extract also illustrates how a collaborative environment was seen as an essential resource for some academics’ professional learning based on others’ professional expertise and experience. Similarly, other participants stressed their agency in relationships in research, including with students. This type of agency is exemplified by Emma’s quote below:
I am open to new ideas that come along, and others approach me about in terms of research. And I’m always happy to talk with people about new ideas, and new approaches. I’ve got PhD students who are doing very innovative stuff and I’ve learnt so much from them and that led to many project initiatives, so I think that’s been continuing throughout my career [Emma].

Emma’s quote points out that the enactment of agency in collaborative research and the intellectual aspects of collaboration by the academics were core to her identity as an academic. Both quotes from Emma and Alan are representative of other participants [Emma, Lucy, Adam, Ian, Matt, Omar, Eva] across several identity trajectories, who interpreted the knowledge and experience of their colleagues as a resource for developing their learning and identity through dialogue and collaboration. At the same time, the quotes above reflect that the participants reconstructed the notion of an expert to work alongside others more effectively and to co-create the best outcomes for everyone involved. This shift was evident in the ways they defined themselves as ones that learn from students. Above all, as exemplified by Emma’s and Alan’s quote above, academics described their colleagues’ knowledge as a resource. That is that they recognised that their colleagues had different knowledge, experiences, opinions, or ideas, which then, through discussion, the academics could incorporate into their own research knowledge.

Also, as evidenced in the quotes above, the academics understood that their resourcefulness was increased when working in a supportive and collegial environment. Both Alan and Emma talked about how much they have always learnt from collaborative research, thus being engaged in the practice further shapes their identities and reaffirms their research identities. Participants strongly endorsed the collective nature of research, viewing their practice in this way inherently required lifelong learning as no research teams are ever the same. For the participants, their practice was about the ways they drew on their own strengths in these moments and also the ways they encouraged others to do the same. Agency in this section was identified as mediating professional learning when academics take stances and make choices to engage in collaborative research. These stances were used to negotiate, re-negotiate, and enact identity within participants’ research communities.
Furthermore, the quotes illustrate the expression of collective agency as the engagement in the collaborative work of pushing the boundaries in their research disciplines and therefore informing and reshaping their disciplinary discourses. Omar’s description of his research projects further increased the capacity to act:

I’m not skilled enough in [research methods], which I need to better understand in this project. So, rather than trying to learn it myself, in this area, people tend to work with a [professional], so I needed to identify such a person. And I’ve made a link with a top researcher in [university A] and she’s agreed to collaborate with me on this work. And she is very skilled in [research method], but also in getting funding. So for us to come together on this was mutually beneficial really. We work well together, we discuss things and have some great initial results to share during [a conference] to take things forward as well as several publications in the pipeline [Omar]

Omar recognised that he was unable to work on the project in solitude and approached another colleague to collaborate. In working together in the discipline, they both shared, they created a good team and had initial results that could have a further impact on their discipline. Through collective action such as discussions and getting additional funding, they worked together to develop and inform their current discipline. All three quotes in this section illustrate that by exercising agency in pushing the boundaries of their discipline, participants evidenced the connection between individual agency and collective agency, as their individual work was connected to the goals of the collaborative project in which they were engaged.

5.3.2.1 Practice inquiry to seek new ideas

The analysis of the data in this section highlighted collaborative inquiry had an impact on participants’ identity trajectories. Inquiry is conceptualised here as reading and writing scientific research as part of developing one’s practice of systematic and intentional research. Inquiry in scientific knowledge production is understood as seeking new ideas, methods, and connections across research areas and developing avenues for building new relationships.
between fields through ongoing questioning and novelty. This orientation implies that research inquiry is part of a process of academic and social engagement and dialogue that maintains an orientation toward critical thinking, debate and problem-solving. These processes articulate new insights and understandings of practice which consequently reshape one’s identities (Butler and Schnellert, 2012). The extract below illustrates how Adam discussed his teaching and research identity through inquiry into his practice.

A certain approach to teaching and research, where the idea is the dialogue, and you are always engaging as part of the process and the process of inquiry that suggest subject matter. This informs your own practice. Its practice is based in that it’s addressing the science of why those points might be relevant. Consideration of the aspect of what might be relevant, then you think about it in a different way so it’s a learning process. Actually, in those concepts and changing if they are incorrect.

[Adam]

Adam enacted his agency by engaging in practices such as reading, questioning, critical thinking, and dialogue with other practitioners, which led to participants’ development of their practice. Having questioned and focused Adam’s evolving understanding of his needs and context, redeveloped his own identities as a teacher and researcher. This representative quote is illustrative of changes in several other participants’ responses in their practice due to engagement with research, which serves to understand the struggles of the participants [Zoe, Eva, Adam, Omar]. Participants were able to establish themselves as knowledgeable in participants disciplinary areas while teaching and adapting to the needs of their students or other practitioners. Although Adam’s examples are not explicit about whether his inquiry was a collaborative process, several other academics were described ways that they had worked with others while adapting their practices. This is exemplified by Omar,

I have had refresher periods with colleagues. I had quite a deep discussion with external practitioners. And again, I learn skills from those sorts of involvements if you like. So, we talk a lot about [area] catching up with what's happening in my field of interest, my field of research and so forth. And so, I constantly do a bit of Google Scholar work and networks or look at some journal papers [...] Like this morning I got
an alert through LinkedIn, no sorry ResearchGate, to a new article just been published, and I was able to request a copy from the author straightaway as an electronic copy and follow it up with some online forum discussions. So, I'm lucky being in [discipline] particularly in these areas of [discipline] where almost I get training as part of everyday work. [Omar]

This extract illustrates how inquiry into his practice is collaborative by engaging with other researchers and practitioners. Omar updated his understanding of the field by engaging with online networks to deepen and catch up on the developments in his field. This quote is representative of other participants who referred to inquiry as agency enactment by finding solutions for challenges in their practice in terms of sharing ideas, mutual learning, an attitude of openness and respect for others' views as presented in public discussion.

Writing research, both individually and with others, was described as a significant part of inquiry and contributing to scientific expertise through writing and publishing empirical research comprised a meaningful aspect of professional practice. In describing their work with colleagues, joint authorship of scientific research was described by most participants. The participants’ above remarks show how being part of a broader community created an opportunity to develop a new identity within an unknown research area that provides the context for a peripheral identity of that community. Moreover, it is worth noting that discussion and evidence so far referred to participants’ research and teaching identity trajectories. Identity development through inquiry was not observed or mentioned by participants in relation to developing leadership identities.

All in all, the enactment of agency through inquiry that impacts on identity development, is related to the epistemological orientation within which people construct and develop scientific knowledge. The social construction of scientific knowledge includes social processes of cooperation, collaboration, and competition. Inquiry is a process of questioning and seeking novel answers to emergent issues. The evidence I have presented so far supports the conclusion that academics’ agentic moves to inquiry is capacity building and problem-solving in a systematic and continuous cycle that develops one’s practice and reshapes one identity (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). As exemplified above, participants became experts and in their
practice community by the process of individual and collaborative inquiry. This section illustrated the agency of academics in approaches to and learning from their engagement in inquiry.

Moreover, there is a strong connection between the affordance of collaborative research practice with the enactment of participants’ agency to reshape and reaffirm their research identity trajectories. All participants were seeking collaboration in the structure of their research communities. Nevertheless, in contrast to seeking collaboration in research, some participants choose to refrain from collaboration in their research, as explored next.

5.3.2.2 Refraining from collaboration in research

The earlier section on collaboration as an affordance highlighted that participants’ research practice is usually collaborative, and it is this collaboration that shapes the development of identity trajectories. The data, however, reports on two academics whose research activities were identified by the participants themselves as an individual activity. The tasks involved in the research were intertwined with other collaborative tasks that made the research available in the first place, but the practice of researching was still viewed as an individual pursuit. Fred, for example, specifically chose to engage in his research mainly by himself:

In terms of my own research, that’s mainly an individual activity. But obviously needs to be supported behind the scenes by librarians and others. [Fred]

Although Fred talked about collaboration with librarians to gather information for his research, he described his research as an individual activity. The scope and nature of Zoe’s research practice also highlighted her agency in being selective in her research activity, which could be both an individual or a collective endeavour.

In terms of research activity, I don’t involve myself as much as I could and that is a conscious decision because of my particular circumstance. Because I am heading towards retirement and because of the amount of work that I have and that I want to do. I choose not to be involved in reading groups and things which I would have enjoyed to focus on my individual work as that this is one less layer of stress that I
don't need. So, I could be a lot more involved in reading and research groups but I choose not to. I am involved in the [discipline] group because that gives me a great amount of pleasure, collaboration and I do it. I just don't involve myself in all groups around me. [Zoe]

Although Zoe recognised the value of a community in research activity, she is selective in the groups she engages with. Being in the position of an older academic who is thinking about retirement, Zoe recognised she had limited time for her research. Zoe differentiated between the research projects that she tackled on her own and those she collaborated on by joining reading groups. Zoe kept her engagement tightly focused to manage her stress and because she had no vision of further career, in consequence that impacted how much and where she put her effort in collaborating with others.

A firm stance in how the participants see working collaboratively in research was also expressed by Adam:

You know in the research area of course I have the freedom to work only with people who I am comfortable working with. So if I find that somebody isn't good collaborator then I tend to stop working with them. I don't believe in wasting my time in research.

[Adam]

Adam’s enactment of agency in taking a stance on how he sees collaboration in research means he either stops or avoids working collaborating with people who he doesn’t feel comfortable with. Above all, it is worth noting that Zoe’s trajectory (Trajectory 5) was defined as that of a teacher primarily. Similarly, Fred’s (Trajectory 1) was centred on research and leading, whilst Adam (Trajectory 6) was primarily a teacher and leader. This is particularly interesting as it shows that in different trajectories participants seem to be able to enact their agency in engaging in research on their own terms by taking a stance in how they want the research projects to work for them. The interrelated relationship between the affordance of collaboration that enables participants to engage in collaborative activities is also shaped by their enactment of agency whereby the participants either choose to engage or they do not. Their reasons varied from personal preferences, relationships with their colleagues,
available time, upcoming retirement, and limited time in their employment.

This section also features an element of a recognition, whereby the participants are being recognised by their colleagues and their communities, that enables the affordance of collaboration on research as discussed in section 5.2.

5.3.3 Collaboration scaffolds leadership

During my observations, the dynamics of an initial meeting of a course production team felt different to meetings in the mid or final stages of their production. Such a creative phase of the course production entailed designing the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment of a course. In contrast to Ian's meeting from Vignette 3, where the collegial and collaborative atmosphere of the meeting meant a smooth transition into a subsequent stage of the production process, two participants below talked about challenges they faced in the quality of the contribution of team members. This point is illustrated by Adam below:

Some colleagues are very good. They've got a strong sense of ownership, they've got a strong sense of commitment to the course team, they want to do a good job. They're reliable, they're dependable. Other colleagues are less reliable, they're less dependable, frankly some of them don't have the ability... something that I have to grapple with as a course team chair. Because what I have to do is somehow try to manage that team in a way that gets the best out of them. It's a challenge I learn to deal with. [Adam]

This extract shows a contrasting view regarding collaborative work, that can be both enabling and constraining for the projects and other academics who engage with the course production process. In result, such collaboration necessitates a certain leadership identity. Adam talked about the variability of commitment, input and level of experience as challenges he had to deal with as a course chair to ensure the success of the course production. Identifying the challenges of and ways to resolve them by a course chair highlights his confidence in his identity as a chair/leader of that course. Also, the data indicates that being given the role of a course team chair equates with the incumbent expressing a leadership
Ensuring a collaborative engagement in practice required a shift in participants’ perception of how to enact their practice. Adam above talked about dealing with challenging and underperforming colleagues, which involves the development of certain leadership and managerial skills. An example below illustrates the skills needed to learn the communicative skills associated with collaboration, mentioned by another participant in the context of institutional leadership:

The ability to communicate with quite a range of people, I think quite a lot of academics maybe are not so used to working with the secretarial and clerical staff and the academic-related staff and I think that’s something probably that I had to learn as well and that I wasn’t quite aware of at the beginning of how important that was. I think the skill of being collaborative and working with people more generally, I think that’s really important. And you do have to, yeah, I was going to say you have to find these people and make sure that you do work with them and work with them collaboratively. [Emma]

Emma pointed out that such collaborative work was a challenge for her to start with. She identified her lack of engagement with non-academic staff as an academic norm, that many of her colleagues have in common. However, she felt it was critical in building her academic identity to change this behaviour and learn to work with many different colleagues within the MET. Her comments were echoed by other academics in the leadership trajectories, Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) who talked about the importance of working collaboratively with colleagues across the MET. This was an example of how participants exercised their agency in ensuring collaborative practice as they had seen its value as an element in the development and enactment of their identities.
5.3.4 Networking leads to collaboration

Networking was a type of collaborative practice that allowed participants to exchange information and ideas and start new tasks and projects. Networking in the context of academics can involve local, national and international networks consisting of memberships of disciplinary societies and organisations, research and collaboration with others, curriculum and course design, as well as online presence (Gardner and Willey, 2018). Several participants highlighted reasons why they found networking practices important. With time and experience, developing networks and connections were part of participants’ identity development as teachers, leaders and researchers. Being an academic meant being able to establish and maintain these networks and collaborative engagements.

Matt from trajectory 2 Institutional Leader, talked about networking as a necessary professional task in which he discovered others and built relationships. Similarly, to the section which discussed how leadership identities were scaffolded by collaborative tasks, building networks opened possibilities to build bridges across different disciplines or avenues for possible collaborative work.

But you do have to find out who the people are you need to talk to. You need to create your networks, you need to make sure that you, or at least I think that’s really important, that you need to stay close to the other members in your team, faculty and broader university [Matt]

Zoe also pointed out that developing relationships with her colleagues was critical in the context of the MET in the smooth development of her Teaching trajectory (Trajectory 5):

You know, every organisation has its idiosyncrasies, but the MET has a great deal of them, and a lot of them are around systems and processes, and so you need to be somebody who is not going to be flummoxed by that, but you’ve just got to sit with it and work out what you need to do and so who can help you with that. I think to my mind, developing relationships with people I feel that it's even more necessary at the MET, because it's not like where you're working at some places where you've got
loads of opportunities to become friends with people, you don't at the MET, so you've got to be really good at developing that closeness quite quickly and being able to build on your relationships with people if you're going to enjoy being around them.

[Zoe]

As the section 5.1 on academic freedom outlined, the MET university afforded hybrid working; thus, staff were often not in the office. Zoe recognised that developing relationships in such a context was more challenging than in other universities. She understood the value of relationships in developing her work, in particular as she recognised the MET's technical shortcomings. Working with others seemed a way to deal with many systems and process problems she faced. Thus, to engage with her practice, develop, and overcome everyday problems she faced as a MET academic, she had to first find the relevant networks. The extract above articulates a strategic approach in exercising her agency to build relationships with staff members, which was evident in all participants. Participants recognised that such involvement would grant access to a broader range of resources they currently have, knowledge, opportunities and experiences to support their identity trajectories.

Furthermore, the data show how several academics used the affordance of collaboration and networking outside of their institution. These networks ranged from their disciplinary research communities but also networks of colleagues at a similar senior level. For instance, Eva talked about using the text messaging tool WhatsApp to maintain expertise across different institutions.

So I have research networks for the two main areas that I work in ... And we've created a WhatsApp group to try and keep that going, because it was actually really helpful to speak with colleagues in a similar position to mine, but at other institutions. I think at the [university] we can be a bit insular at times, so it's good to get that external perspective. [Eva]

Eva's networks are essential to maintain a broader view of her practice beyond her workplace, that she otherwise finds limiting. Sharing concerns and hearing others' issues were considered a valuable factor that shaped her practice. Building relationships with other
academics was a deliberate expression of agency that participants employed to build their system of relations within their practice. In doing so, this enabled participants to be defined as an academic (teachers, leader or a researcher) by other academics at the MET and beyond. Moreover, developing networks for collaboration necessitates time and experience, suggesting older academics have developed over time as they’ve progressed their own practice and identities. This is evident from vignette 4 below:

Vignette 4. Alan’s observation of his office work

Alan’s observation of his work

Environment: Alan’s office. Alan’s sat at his desk and focused on a report he wanted to complete.

Summary of the observation:
During the review of the document, he realised part of the document was missing and so he had to have a conversation on the telephone to nudge one of the external authors to submit her part. Alan met the author of the missing section at a conference they both attended. During the call, Alan started by discussing the recent conference they both attended and sharing their opinions on the keynote speaker who they both knew. The external author also mentioned how impressed she was by his ongoing research and his input during the workshop they both attended. Then Alan reminded the person of the report that was due and the missing part he needed from the external author. He mentioned that time was precious and that publishing this report may mean further collaboration. He mentioned he was the main author and he needed the author’s input on the section she had initially agreed to write. The speaker on the phone agreed to work on the section that day and apologised for not prioritising it sooner.

Alan’s observation highlighted how meeting a colleague led to the task of collaborating on a
report, despite having to nudge the colleague to fulfil the agreed tasks. Thus, although the affordance of collaboration can be enabled by new networks, the example from Vignette 4 indicates that the relationship has to be nurtured to ensure collaboration. There was also a sense of recognition for Alan’s input during the event they both attended, that suggests that Alan’s practice was recognised by his new network. Being in a recognised position has leverage on what others may or may not agree to do for someone or with that person. In this example, Alan’s new network member agreed to do work on her part as she did not want to say ‘no’ to Alan. Thus, an affordance of collaboration enabled by networking has another layer when considering participants’ recognised positions. Alan’s recognition of his research meant that a new network outside of his institution agreed to collaborate, which created space for the participant’s further development of his identity.

5.3.1 Brokering – is it an affordance or an agency?

Brokering is understood as connecting people, coordinating practices, and transacting resources across boundaries (Wenger-Trayner, et al., 2014), hence its positionality within the broader theme of collaboration. All participants whose trajectories demonstrated a leadership identity Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and some academics whose trajectories encompassed a research Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) discussed their agentic moves by proactively making choices in developing and maintaining relationships across their various networks. These enactments were related to brokering opportunities for themselves, but also in order to influence other people’s work. This is exemplified in the quote below by Alan.

I put a lot of time into networking and brokering both across the university and outside it. So as I became aware through my networks of interesting kinds of opportunities I am often aware of other people in my networks that might be able to exploit them so I spend quite a lot of time trying to introduce people with interesting capabilities to interesting opportunities. ... I bumped into a producer I knew from doing some work with the [programme] a couple of years ago and I found myself sat next to each other on the train by accident and discovered that she was working on
the programme about [discipline] and I happen to know that a chap in another faculty have done really big study on [discipline] and so I was able to make a contact. And hopefully that will lead to our academic appearing on the [programme] and get a broader profile for some of the universities research. [Alan]

Alan’s agency in fostering networks was primarily related to his own identity development. Nevertheless, there was also an element of brokering related to the act of networking. In this extract, Alan connected a person he met by accident on a train with an expert he knew from his faculty. He realised both worked in the same area and introduced them to each other, which he hoped would lead to a collaborative project, boosting the university’s research profile. This quote considers choice making in relation to brokering opportunities. There is a nuanced picture here as this view of brokering is neither about the affordance, nor is it about agency. It’s about the role of serendipity and choice making. Alan said he bumped into someone. Bringing different communities together in this example was very random, yet it could develop into a relationship that broadens participants’ or their colleagues’ networks. Alan was not planning to make that connection, however as the opportunity presented itself, he made a choice to do so.

Another brokering example is presented by Mathew, which involved introducing new colleagues to an ongoing project. As presented in Vignette 5, Mathew's knowledge of other people's expertise meant that he suggested colleagues to be part of the ongoing project that could lead to new tasks within this project.

Vignette 5. Mathew's F2F project meeting

Mathew’s F2F project meeting (Mathew and six other attendees)

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss project updates from various stakeholders and to have a discussion on the next phase of the project. The participant observed was not the chair of the meeting, although he had set up the project in the first place. During the meeting, the chair asked an open question to all attendees for suggestions
about the next stage of the project, which involved organising an event to promote the project.

Mathew let other attendees suggest what they felt would benefit the project. Eventually Mathew participated and suggested that the secretary of the project should be introduced to several colleagues who might be interested in the event. He suggested what those people could add to the event and how inviting them could lead to a collaborative output in the form of a book, which could be discussed afterwards. He further suggested that one of the members should lead the collaboration. As other members agreed with Mathew's suggestions, he wrote down an action point to himself to write an introductory email to link the secretary with the colleagues under discussion.

Both Mathew and Alan had a sense of the expertise of others, and they made a choice to enable collaborative projects for others. They both identified themselves as brokers based on their networks and experience, which allowed them to link other practitioners and enable possible new learning opportunities. This potential for spontaneous connections and serendipity—and the resulting potential for new exploration without initial intention or design is a key aspect of the value of networks for learning (Wenger, 2014).

Furthermore, being in the position of a broker affirms participants’ wider networks, relationships and expertise. Above all, both examples illustrated how participants valued their networks and colleagues, using these connections to influence others’ collaborations by introducing them to each other. Assisting others’ learning was associated with the academics’ identification of themselves as professionals and of themselves as a resource for the learning of others. In this way choices in brokering were related to perceiving a space to engage in their own professional practice: influencing others and reinforcing their own positive identification of their own professional competencies.

5.3.2 Conclusion to subsection

The data suggested that the structure of academic practice is collaborative. Teaching at the MET necessitated collaboration so academics could put courses together. Research practice
on the other hand was less restrictive, which meant that the participants discussed different levels of agency in relation to their collaboration in research endeavours; albeit most talked about exercising agency through collaboratively pushing the boundaries of their discipline. Participants evidenced the connection between individual agency and collective agency, as their individual work was connected to the goals of the collaborative project they were engaged with. The data analysis indicated that older academics’ development of identity trajectories were mediated by agency when they intentionally and proactively developed and maintained relationships with colleagues, students, and other professionals. The enactment of agency was often related to a desire to work with esteemed colleagues. Participants described intentional choices of research and teaching companions to develop their research and teaching identities, but also, highlighted developing and maintain relationships in their leadership practice and thus developing their leadership identities. Those participants focused on leadership Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva), discussed how the collaboration and in particular networking scaffolded their leadership practice. In addition, the theme of collaboration as an affordance was strongly linked with the affordance of recognition. For example, Lucy and Ian were invited to collaborations based on their previous experiences, thus for being recognised as assets. In exercising agency, they made a choice to engage in such projects. Thus, the dynamics of affordances and agency constantly change but also build on each other. Finally brokering as a sub theme of collaboration was discussed as a nuanced picture as being neither about agency, nor about the affordance, but a serendipity.

5.4 The affordance of time to reflect

This subsection reports on the affordance of time the participants have had to develop their practice. The participants interpreted their past and current practice as part of their identity trajectories, and through reflecting on these experiences, they were able to further develop their practice and identities. These findings align with the conceptualisation of identity as being negotiated in everyday interactions and experiences (Archer, 2008).
interview, Wenger also noted that “... identity itself is a time/space concept” ... [in that] “you become a person out of a whole series of experiences over time” (Farnsworth, Kleanthous & Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p. 11-12). This section is particularly significant given the age of the participants and thus the considerable amount of previous experience and time they have had to develop and shape their identities. Participants’ perceptions of their identities and specialised areas of expertise developed over time in certain areas of their practice, expressed through their discussions of seniority and work experience.

Two examples below demonstrate how the reflections on extensive experience equipped participants to feel confident and competent in their roles.

I feel I’ve got now, whereas 20 years ago I didn’t, I feel I’ve now got the experience and the confidence to be able to go into a meeting and play a leading role, to manage the business in a way that is good for me and is good for the team to get the business through the meeting in a way that’s desirable for everyone. You know, I find myself doing that. [Adam]

Is through engaging in research activities then I acquire the skills and are able to develop and find a role within that, like I say it’s within [sector], having been involved in that for many, many years I now can find a role for myself in a [sector] very easily. It’s because I’ve been observant, and I’ve learnt how various things work, and then you just become more competent at it really. [Omar]

Both participants’ views of previous experience illustrate their self-assurance as professionals. Adam’s outlined how his leadership and management identities developed over the years, whereas Omar discussed how he found himself within his research identity.

As illustrated in the extract above, change ranged from becoming more observant to becoming increasingly adaptable to the challenges faced. The examples above represent an overall feeling of participants drawing on their own experience, observations and learning on the job to enhance their professional learning. In addition, these activities deepen participants’ understanding of their practices, which scaffolded their professional identities.

Having two decades of experiences shaped their sense of self and who they were in their
practice. The data showed clear evidence of reflection and transformation, with academics noticing that they were in the process of change (Olson & Craig, 2009) in response to their developing practice.

Several participants described their practice as something they were thrown into without much guidance and support. This is exemplified by Lucy’s experiences:

“Well, I have never been inducted in any sense. In being prepared to what I do, the university sort of has a habit of, here is the person here is the job get on with it. [Lucy]

Lucy spoke about how her experiences were not scaffolded by her employer. It is worth mentioning that Lucy was speaking in this instance about her teaching. Alan, on the other hand, talked about the development of his leadership experience:

“I am often sort of left to figure out things by myself, but this is not because people aren’t willing to help but because they genuinely recognise I can get things done myself.” [Alan]

Both extracts show participants learnt on the job by figuring things out and being left to get on with their roles. There is a difference however in how the academics in the two examples interpreted getting those experiences and thus developing their identities. Lucy implied a lack of time from the employer to explain, navigate and lead her development. Her experience was not shared by other participants of the teacher identity trajectory. Alan, on the other hand, also spoke about a lack of support but saw this as trust that was placed upon him to problem solve. Such feelings were shared by several other participants, in both research and leadership related contexts, Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar). Having many years of relevant experience meant that participants were able to engage with the practice that was required of them based on their previous experience and trust others placed in them. Thus, the affordance of time and indeed years of relevant experience opened avenues for further development of their identities.
There was a general understanding that the older a person is, the more life experience they have. An example that evidences participants’ reflection in relation to the development of their identity was presented by Alan as a researcher, a teacher, and a leader below:

I mostly learn by doing or learn by interacting with people who know a lot more about stuff than I do. So you know that would be also true in my research, in my administrative work it would be true in my teaching and leadership. I guess another thing to mention here is that I learn when making mistakes and learning from those mistakes by reflecting on what could be done to be better next time. [Alan]

Alan listed different practices that he felt facilitated learning on the job and reflecting on his own experiences. He admitted doing things wrong at times, but he stressed the importance of reflection and learning from his mistakes. Similarly, Zoe’s account, refers to observation and reflection.

I think that you just find that as you go along there are things that you need to do, you don’t know how to do them and you have to learn how to do them. And that’s either you sit and you struggle through and you do it badly one time and then you do it better the next time, so you teach yourself in that sense, or you learn informally just by being part of a team and you see how other people do things and you think ooh that’s good, OK, I’ll do it like that next time. [Zoe]

Zoe, in her development of her teacher identity, exercised her agency by watching and analysing others’ experiences, reflecting on her own experiences and identifying areas for improvement. Alan and Zoe’s quotes evidence critical self-reflection as an agentic process was described in the development of the participant’s own practice. Self-reflection is a process of intentionally considering one’s professional practice for the purpose of professional improvement. As evidenced by the above three quotations, both Zoe and Alan chose to exercise agency and reflect on what they could do to improve their professional practice for the benefit of the colleagues and students. Self-reflection was primarily described as reflection-on-action, in which the participants considered their practice with a
critical eye to identify areas for improvement (Schön, 1983). The participants interpreted their experiences and thus enacted their agency to learn from those experiences as part of their own personal learning trajectory, and through reflecting on these experiences were able to develop their identities as leaders, teachers, and researchers.

Furthermore, Eva in the quote below points out how teaching identity requires foremost experience along with some formal training.

> I think things like teaching, to really learn how to teach you do have to do it. There's a certain amount of theory, a certain amount of workshops that you can do, but actually you learn by doing it [Eva]

The examples in this subsection represent an overall feeling of participants drawing on their own experiences, observations and learning on the job to enhance their professional learning and deepen understanding of their practice which scaffolded their professional identities. As exemplified above, Eva and Zoe talked about their teaching identity, Adam and Fred discussed their leadership and management identity, whereas Omar spoke about his research identity. Overall having two decades of experiences shaped participants' sense of self and who they are in their practice. The data also shows that, although all participants talked about identity development through observation and experience, their accounts of self-reflection on their practice in identity development were less frequent. In fact, only two participants (Zoe, Alan) mentioned it explicitly. This is not to say that the rest of the academics were not reflective in their practice, rather it was the case that two academics made it explicit to mention it in response to the opportunities afforded by the research design. The agency enactment within this affordance was noted when participants interpreted their previous experience and made a choice to learn from those experiences.

### 5.5 Values and motivations

Values and motivations were a final subtheme perceived as an affordance that both enabled and inhibited participants' engagement in practice. Values and norms are understood both from the perspective of the academics, what is important to them, as well as the MET, what
Through the data analysis, I found that a strong sense of agency enactment impacting participants identities was observed when academics described their values and motivations in relation to certain aspects of their practice. Participants articulated the specific values and motivations they brought to their practice, including their commitment to students and social justice, engagement in public debate, but also resistance in power relations. These expressions of commitment and stance were used to negotiate, re-negotiate and enact professional identity within a landscape of participant's practice. These sub-themes will be discussed in turn.

5.5.1 Commitment to students and social justice

A sub theme that was persistently present in all the interviews was the value of providing education for people who have been socially, economically, and educationally excluded. Such a public ethos was important to the participants, and it highlighted how they understood their academic identities by being committed to student and social justice. Nixon et al (2001, p.229) refer to commitment to one's students and commitment to society as attributes of a "new academic professionalism".

Section 3.5 described the nature of the participants' workplaces at the MET University; mainly doctoral students attended the MET campus for face-to-face lectures, seminars and supervision meetings. There were also regular tutorials for undergraduate and postgraduate students (although lead by lecturers and no one of the participants were lecturers at the time of data collection), as well as occasional face-to-face study days organised at various locations for some undergraduate and master's programmes. Furthermore, Table 4.3. Participants’ current projects and tasks within their identity trajectories, indicates that eight participants out of eleven mentioned postgraduate research supervision projects in which they were involved. The data shows that participants had contact with a range of postgraduate research students, including those doing doctorates and MPhil qualifications.

The participants talked about the commitment they had to their postgraduate distance learning students, especially considering they never saw undergraduate students face-to-face given the MET set up. The interplay between the specific context of the MET university and
agency was noted in looking for more student interaction than in previous employment at other universities. The participant’s opportunity to be challenged by her students spurs this participant to do more:

Because I am less involved in face-to-face teaching and contact with students than I was in my previous institution I make more of an effort to work with students and I’ve got quite a few PhD students and because I like the interaction with students partly because it is another way that challenges my thinking my knowledge and I enjoy that. So probably I wouldn’t have so many students if it was face to face and I would work with them quite differently [Lucy]

These comments reflect a postgraduate supervisor identity that participants valued and felt was significant in their academic practices. Their agentic enactment of choosing to have several supervision projects created for Lucy a source of learning whereby she was challenged in her discipline. This source of learning in turn developed Lucy’s identity in her research discipline. This quote also aligns with a similar remark made by Emma in subsection 5.5.2 whereby she referred to her collaborative research practice. Both quotes illuminate that the knowledge and experience of their students was seen by the participants as a resource for learning and the development of their research identity. These academics welcomed challenges to their authority and recognised that they might expect their students to know more than they do.

Similarly, Eva, in the quote below was driven by her commitment to a student’s experience in a wider distance learning student population. She specifically pointed out what aspects of her practice she was excited about the most:

But I don’t want to spend my life in academia writing curriculum. That’s not what excites me. What excites me is the students: how we teach, innovative ways of teaching, multimedia approaches, and how students learn. [Eva]
Eva chose to take on roles where she led teaching rather than making courses. Taking a stance in what interests her meant she enacted her agency in shaping her identity trajectory to be a teacher leader.

Overall, participants expressed their great sense of commitment to students' experiences and students' journeys when producing courses as well as enacting leadership roles. In both these projects, the participants reiterated how students' needs and expectations drove their practice. An example of which is demonstrated below:

What I am passionate about is the students, without a single doubt, without our students we don't exist, and therefore everything that we are doing is, around improving the student experience, improving their opportunities for success, and making sure that what we offer is what both our current and our future students need in order to succeed. And therefore, it's about that ability to bring real-world experiences to make the theory come alive for students and contextualise it. For me it’s all about social justice, and it’s about equality of opportunity... so enabling people to take the opportunity that works for them. So that might mean they don’t get a qualification, but they succeed on a course. If they succeed on a course, big tick. And that's why I went into leadership. [Alison]

In this account, the focal point of the participant’s practice is students and their sense of social justice. The participant identified her role by contextualising her research, experience, and the passion she has for the student's experience. This quote is representative of two other participants [Emma, Fred] who had strong leadership identities and focused their work on providing the best experience for their students. Based on these participants’ interests and passions concerning students, the participants spoke of moving into leadership. They engagement in practice as institutional leaders was driven by enacting their agency in the way they saw fit to ensure that students experiences improved and that students had access to learning opportunities. These participants’ passions were in line with the practice determined by the school and the MET in general. Similarly, Alan’s quote below reaffirms the passion he had for student success and reflects the feelings of other academics as well:
So the value was it boils for me is what we've got is to provide the widest possible access to high quality higher education in the widest range of people in ways that genuinely transform people's life and I genuinely have seen that here. And I think that there is a huge commitment to that social aspect that social mission and people will fight out upwards if they think that it is not being paid enough attention to it. [Alan]

Similarly, to Alison’s quote above, Alan talks about how his agency is driven by values concerned with providing access to education. Apart from being individual enactments of agency in their practice, both quotes highlight how collectively academic practice is informed by a value based concerned with widening access to education. Their values motivated these participants to sustained themselves as institutional leaders.

Furthermore, both the quotes above from Alison and Alan mention values that pertain core values and missions of the MET. Four participants [Matt, Omar, Fred, Adam] mentioned that they joined the MET university due to the mission the place upholds. This is exemplified by the quote below:

I think that’s why I joined [the MET] in the first place because I really valued what the [the MET] was doing differently from other universities. [Omar]

These academics loved that the mission of the MET was aligned with their own agency and values to engage with their practice. Being in a position to work in a place that shares the value of open education meant the participants sought out employment at the MET.

Similarly, to the commitment the participants felt towards students and social justice recognised in particular at the MET context, participants discussed their motivations to contribute to public debates. This dimension is presented below.
5.5.1 Public debate

The second dimension of participants’ values and motivations which shaped the enactment of their agency observed in this study was their participating in a public debate. This was recognised in participants’ commitment to be actively involved in a public debate as educators and citizens. Their identities were enriched as participants learnt more about themselves and their contexts. They increasingly clarified their strengths and interests and consolidated their original mission, appreciating the unique contributions they hoped to make in a public debate via their disciplinary expertise. The analysis found six participants across identity trajectories: Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) in particular, who focused on projects that influenced the public debate on certain issues. Adam typifies such commitment:

So, my job, in terms of participation, I see this as a wider participation in public debate, I see this as me getting involved as a citizen, as an educator outside the academy, outside the university, being more actively involved. Because I passionately believe that [subject] is the most pressing challenge that we face this century. That humanity faces this century. There is no more pressing challenge. There are other challenges that we face as a society. But at the end of the 21st century when the history of this century is written, it will be in large measure about how well we have dealt with the problem of [subject]. [Adam]

Participants felt that their disciplines were very relevant to today’s public debates. They all felt that being engaged in conversations with the public outside the research communities were important. Their agentic position to engage with wider society was to take a stance in the debates related to their disciplines. Promoting their disciplines and influencing others of its importance was what they identified with. Zoe in the quote below describes the project she initiated that she hoped would eventually have a big impact on teachers:
I’ve got my own project going on I love, a project I initiated it. [....] which is basically a lot of people feel very anxious about [school subject] and will actually avoid if it’s all possible. So I’ve written some materials for secondary schools to use to introduce the idea behind resilience in teaching the [school subject]. My next piece of work on that is to look at how the [subject] department use these materials and try to make them as big of an impact as possible. And then to get them country wider, I hope. So that’s really interesting to me and I am committed to work on it long hours. [Zoe]

Within her discipline, Zoe carved out a new role for herself, working with the schools and teachers on debating the issue of teachers’ resilience. She recognised this as an important issue and her speciality. In this way she was enacting her agency to support teachers and schools who struggled with this issue. Her strong sense of mission to help others and open a discussion on the issue shaped her identity in her discipline.

Apart from examples taken from interviews, observations provided a glimpse into the participants’ focus on projects which reflected passions for sharing their knowledge and expertise with the wider group of public. As an example, Vignette 6 presents a short description of an observation with Omar:

Vignette 6. Omar’s F2F observation of his office work

Omar’s F2F observation of his office work

Work activities: Omar was observed during what he called a typical day in the morning when he spends most of his time replying to emails and engaging with follow up tasks noted from the previous day. During the meeting I ask the participant every 5 or 10 minutes what he was working on and why.

Omar explained that he gets a lot of requests from various organisations and private people to comment on cases related to his discipline. The email he received was from an
organisation he offered his thoughts to previously. As he is an expert in that specific field, a lot of work for the review comes his way as he is the go-to person for those cases. He explained that when he receives the files, he feels he needs to review them as soon as possible. Omar finds it hard to resist because he knows the cases are sensitive, so he looks at them in turn. For the first case, he wrote an explanation with his points of view, attached resources and suggested links the organisation could direct the case to if there were any concerns. He also pointed out the case could be sensitive for the organisation and suggested a [discipline] policy review. He explained he felt the need to be engaged in the public debate around his discipline and offer his point of view. This is the reason why he tries to reply to queries he gets from other people about the discipline. He explained that over the years he decided to go to several events organized by various institutions such as schools, industry and research-oriented institutions to engage in the debates related to his expertise.

Omar’s vignette and the quotes from Lucy and Adam above highlight the identity of the participant that is social. Enacting agency by responding to but also applying new ideas in their fields to public debates meant participants became public experts. The participants' identities became more social and public rather than individual or what Archer refers to as an actor. Archer maintains that it is only specific people who become ‘actors’ (Archer, 2003, p. 118). To achieve a social identity, actors go beyond being particular persons, for example having a personal identity of a lecturer, but find other roles such as a presenter at a conference or a consultant in which ‘they feel they can invest themselves, that is, they personify the roles they choose to occupy’ (Archer, 2000, p. 257). The findings from these three participants highlighted that these additional roles represent an expression of participants’ values. Achieving a social identity requires one’s agency to mediate one’s becoming an actor. In the data above, the participants became socially significant due to their intentionality of being involved in public debates around their disciplines. They became actors, that is, the academics went further than playing the role of lecturers by gaining more roles in the social world. These roles became their identities.
So far, the findings indicated that the enactment of agency to commit to students and wider public in how the participants engage in their practice, align with those of the MET. The MET was thus considered as an affordance where the participants are enabled to exercise their agency to dedicate themselves to their students and others in a wider social landscape of practice. In contrast, the following section, reports on clashes between what is important to the participants and the strategic direction taken by the MET senior team and the implications for their agency and identity.

5.5.1 Resistance

A clash of values was noted between academics and an internal university-wide approach of the senior team at the MET. There was a common dissatisfaction amongst all participants concerning the proposed changes in relation to the MET strategy, causing some participants to feel withdrawn from certain tasks in their practice, while others were prompted to take a stance on what they believed the MET was all about. This theme, therefore, explores agency as a resistance to norms and regulations when these conflict with academics' professional values and commitments (McAlpine, Amundsen and Turner, 2014; Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen and Hökkä, 2015).

Both Adam’s and Emma’s comments reflect the enactment of participants’ agency through challenging authority:

[senior leader] started messing with the way of a fundamental part of what the MET is, what it does and how we operate. And when [senior leader] did that that’s when serious disaffection started, and people started getting really upset. And I think that, when there was the uprising earlier in the year, of which I was a part, when there was that uprising it was because he was messing with the MET values, and the relationship between us and our students in a way that people just couldn’t tolerate, and just couldn’t accept. [Adam]

So we basically were kicking against what [senior leader] was trying to do for at least two years and, that was quite a challenging time, because [senior leader] had all these
ideas and schemes, but we were trying to say, no, you can’t do this, this is a university, we do need research, research informs teaching, the students want us to do research, you can’t really, otherwise you’re just a some kind of a teaching institution. So that was probably the biggest challenge in my entire career that I’ve had ... I think the fact that there was this very negative thing happening also meant that people ganged up on him. So I’ve got a very good relationship with my other [senior colleagues] and I think that relationship was probably strengthened over the past couple of years, because we just, in a way, needed each other to try and make our case stronger. [Emma]

Both quotes outline the challenging period the MET was going through when a senior leader was trying to alter the direction and current practices of the university. Participants not only discussed their upset and dissatisfaction with the proposed changes, but they also described their agency in reacting and accepting those changes. In specific, both quotes illustrate how a collective agency of resistance to [the senior leader] powers in response to perceived potential threats to the current practice, the positionality of research, and research informed teaching. The participants and other members of the MET came together to create organized infrastructures and networks which were intended to oppose the proposed changes by the [senior leader] in the face of potential university restructuring and reform. While Emma talks about a period of two years when the resistance took place, Adam refers to it as his involvement in an ‘uprising’.

The academics’ practice in relation to this collective action was imbued with a sense of professional solidarity. The concentration of senior positions of the participants was seen as a force of power against the threat of impending university reform. These collective initiatives of resistance created stronger and more clearly defined networks between colleagues that were used to come together in opposing changes. Emma pointed out how her relationship with other senior colleagues was strengthened amidst this uncertain time.

This collective way of enacting agency, which has a political aspect in the sense of having the goal of influencing the university’s strategic decisions, oriented participants’ professional
decision-making based upon their own professional values. Both Emma and Adam refer to research and research-informed teaching as crucial to how they identify with and thus imagine themselves. One voice of a collective decision-making process evidences the overlap between individual agency and collective agency. Individual agency was enacted through academics’ stances and choices, reflecting the desire to have control over their practice. Whereas collective agency was displayed through the process of dialogue and shared action that affected the practices of individuals and the professional community as a whole.

In contrast to Adam’s and Eva’s stance, other participants felt their resistance to the senior leader would not make any difference. In consequence, they exercised their agency through a lack of engagement in certain aspects of their practice. The following quote demonstrates how Eva felt she was not heard and, as a result, chose to skip developmental workshops.

“It was a very difficult time, I think. I think a lot of colleagues, and this includes myself as well, stopped engaging with university level change, because after a while we realised that we were making absolutely no difference to anything. So for example I stopped going to workshops on the teaching excellence model, because it was clear that whatever we said was simply ignored and disregarded. So I think I retreated somewhat, as did many colleagues, and tried to just focus on those things that I knew I could influence. Those things that I knew I could make a difference on. So that was very much more at course level, qualification level, and very much ignoring that bigger picture, because it was simply impossible to influence that. [Eva]"

Feeling her voice was not heard, Eva chose to focus on projects she felt she had some control and impact on. Although Eva’s agency was being restricted during the time of institutional change, she found other aspects to make a difference in what was possible to her. She exemplified however, how an obstruction in the form of senior MET directions could influence the direction of her identity trajectories. Her identity as a leader was met with a barrier, thus she focused on her identity as a teacher. All participants challenging the senior team were of trajectories related to leadership. Significantly, Eva was not as senior as Emma and Alan, which could have had an impact in how she perceived her role as not being able to
make any difference. Eva enacted her agency in this situation by changing the focus of her practice, seeing no point in active resistance.

There is a caveat in reporting on this section given its challenging topic of resistance. The MET has been difficult to deidentify and this is one of the reasons why it has been crucial to make all possible efforts to protect the identities involved.

5.5.2 Conclusion to subsection

The data evidenced that participants’ values and motivations were noted in how they exercised their agency. All participants spoke highly of the relevance of commitment to students, and the majority [Adam, Lucy, Omar, Alan, Eva, Ian] described the engagement in public debate as being important in their practice. These expressions of commitment and stance evidenced their negotiate, re-negotiate and enact professional identity within a landscape of participant’s practice, but their reinstatement of their identity trajectories as academics focused on students and wider social responsibility.

The data also highlighted agency enactment of participants in a situation where their values were challenged by a senior team within the MET. Several academics within the trajectories encompassing leadership focus [Emma, Adam] spoke of a collective agency in resisting the change by coming together and challenge the senior team, whilst others [Eva] although rejecting the directions, they submitted to the changes as they saw no real impact in their resistance.

5.6 Chapter conclusion

The second findings chapter considered affordances for participation shaping older academics’ identities and reported on the academics exercising their agency in deciding in how they engaged with their research, teaching and leadership practice. The aim of this chapter was to provide evidence for answering RQ2: How do the affordances available to older academics' practice shape their identity? And RQ3: How does the individual agency of older academic’s impact on their identity development?
The overall aim of this chapter was to bring to the fore the affordances which tell us about the structure and processes the participants inhabited. These affordances enabled but also restricted the practice of the participants. They provided opportunities and invitations for individuals to engage with practice and interactions that impacted on their identity trajectories in ways that would be otherwise unavailable. The affordances also supported and mediated the access to knowledge required for engaging in those projects and tasks that they would not have had access to through a discovery alone.

An **affordance of academic freedom** created a structure where participants had the possibility to engage with the tasks and projects they were interested in. This type of affordance also involved having the freedom to choose the working patterns they wanted (either working from home, from the office or mixed). Through these choices participants exercised their agency to focus on the identity trajectories they were passionate about. Similarly, an affordance of being recognised created a structure for participants to engage with their practice further, for instance through new tasks, projects, and roles, thus reaffirming their identity trajectories. Often this recognition was possible because of the veteran participants’ long experiences in their practices. Some academics were recognised for their research practice, that created opportunities to spend more time on their research endeavours. Similarly, those recognised as reliable teachers were able to influence the details of the courses they worked on. It is also within this affordance that the lack of recognition, in the form of an educational qualification (PhD), meant that a participant (Alison) was unable to progress in her career.

When considering the **affordances of collaboration**, the findings also highlighted a more nuanced picture of the conceptualisation of affordances whereby certain practices necessitate an affordance. The findings discussed earlier indicated that the way of producing courses at the MET necessitate the affordance of collaboration. The data suggested that it was not as simple as the MET enabling an affordance of collaboration, where the participants had the space to either work collaboratively or not. The way a practice is conducted, in this case a practice of putting courses together, requires a structure of a collaboration. The courses would not be put together if it was not for a collaborative effort. In exercising agency in relation to teaching identity by collaboratively pushing the boundaries of their discipline,
participants evidenced the connection between individual agency and collective agency. Participants’ individual agentic enactment was connected to the goals of the collaborative project they were engaged with.

Whilst most academics choose to collaborate in research practice, three participants’ research was a solo endeavour [Fred, Zoe, Adam]. These enactments of agency in both research and teaching shaped their researcher and teaching identities. Not only did participants identify specific disciplines they were passionate about, for which they negotiated their time, but also the ways they engaged with those disciplines, namely whether they were collaborators or not.

Moreover, being able to respond to requests and create brokering opportunities was another way of how academics enacted their agency related to affordances of collaboration. Participants made a choice as to when to respond and/or share their expertise. Moreover, being in a position of a broker affirmed participants’ identities as being recognised and having wide networks and expertise. Furthermore, delegating was a particular enactment of agency, whereby participants discussed how they learn to delegate as they developed their leadership identities. Being in a position to exercise their agency by delegating some of their tasks allowed them to focus on the projects they found of more interest. When reporting on these three themes in exercising agency, the participants delineated their growing work experience and senior responsibilities and benefits.

The **affordance of time** to develop practice, to reflect and observe was also perceived as a fundamental aspect in the development of participants practice and thus identity trajectories. Participants exercised their agency by observing, reflecting, and thus improving their practice. This affordance had a particular affinity with older academics, as they have had a long time in their carer to exercise their agency in such ways. The data demonstrated how extensive experiences equipped participants to feel confident and competent in their roles but also had an impact on their self-assurance within their identities.

The findings also reported on the **values, motivations** and interests of the participants when considering the enactment of their agency shaping their identity. Participants were
committed to students and social justice, engagement in a public debate and challenging top-
down power when that undermined their values. They strongly identified with the values of
providing education for people who have been socially, economically and educationally
excluded. For some participants, their commitment to students was reflected in choosing to
develop their identities whilst engaging more frequently in supervision projects due to the
nature of the MET university, whilst for others this was driven by their interest in strategies
related to students’ journeys, linked to the development of leadership identities. The core
missions of the university were also mentioned by several participants whose choice to
remain at the MET were driven by what the institution represents in terms of its commitment
students and social justice.

The data analysis also identified participants’ commitment to being actively involved in public
debates as educators and citizens. Their agentic position to engage with wider society was to
take a stance in the wider debates related to their disciplines, promoting their disciplines and
influencing others of their importance was what they identified with as proponents of their
disciplines.

Another sub theme related to values and motivations was exercising agency in resistance to
top-down powers when these conflicted with academics' professional values and
commitments. On the one hand, several academics enacted collective agency to stand up
and challenge the senior leader, which was imbued with a sense of professional solidarity and
the concentration of senior positions as a force of power against the threat of impending
university reform. On the other hand, other participants felt powerless in challenging senior
leaders, especially those who were in lower senior positions. Instead of opposing the top-
down senior management reforms, they focused their efforts on engaging with the practices
they had some control over.

Above all, the findings highlighted both individual and collective instances of agency
enactment having an impact on participants identities. Exercising agency at work means
taking initiatives and seizing opportunities (affordances) as well as taking control over work
situations and resisting external forces (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, & Hökka, 2012). These
findings are visualised in the following chapter (Table 6.1 Typology of interrelated

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relationship between Affordances and Agency enactment) which summarises these relationships.

The next and final chapter discusses the research questions, relates the findings to the wider literature in the area, identifies gaps and potential problems and points to future work that could arise from this thesis.
6 Discussion, Contribution and Conclusions

6.1 Research intentions and aims

This research has addressed three research questions:

RQ1. In what ways is older academics’ practice shaped by their individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?

RQ2. How do the affordances available to older academics’ practice shape their identity?

RQ3. How does the individual agency of older academics impact on their identity development?

The study sets out to examine the ever-changing identity trajectories of older academics in a HE setting. It follows on from many other studies exploring the dynamics of academic identities (Harris, 2005; McAlpine, Amundsen and Turner, 2014; McNaughton and Billot, 2016; Trautwein, 2018). The focus of the study on older academics is due to the scarce literature about this group of practitioners. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 1, following the recent demographic trend of an ageing population of academic staff in UK universities (Universities UK & Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2017; Weaver et al., 2018) and the structural and societal factors motivating many to work beyond the national State Pension Age (SPA) (Unwin et al., 2015; Kaskie, 2017), this study addresses the need to investigate the work practices and identity trajectories of older academics.

Arising from the three RQs, the study had three aims:

The first was to gain an insight into the different trajectories of these older academics by uncovering their previous and current work practice when looking at tasks and projects within their practice. The findings indicated that six individual trajectories could be identified as shaping the older academics’ practice included in this study, which was explained by their different modes of engagement, alignment and imagination (Wenger, 1998).
The second aim was to explore the affordances and agency shaping these trajectories understood through the context (affordances) and the way (agency) that individuals make sense of this context (Billett, 2001). The study aligns with other researchers who argued that both the context and the way that individuals make sense of this context should be examined when investigating identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate, 2015). Academic experiences in this study were found to be unique, which aligns with Billett’s conceptualisation of ‘the inevitable negotiation between the workplace’s norms and practices and the individuals’ subjectivities and identities’ (Billett, 2004b, p.114). This study has been able to evidence how individuals enter workplaces with their own idiosyncratic personal learning experiences, perceptions, and memories, which shape their dispositions to a particular participatory practice. Therefore, in alignment with other literature, this study considered both the structure (affordances) but also the agency that individuals employ within their academic landscape of practice. As a result, the processes of alignment (congruence and incongruence) with the values, practices, and norms of the communities of practice the academics were investigated. Individuals’ biographies, norms and values, were also explored, as these were seen as integral to their academic identity formation (Foreman and Whetten, 2002).

The third and final aim was to consider the implications of this study for the practice of other academics, researchers, policy makers and professional development professionals.

6.2 Synthesis of the findings

6.2.1 Research question one: A focus on Practice

The first research question asked: *In what ways is academics’ practice shaped by older academics’ individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice?* This question aimed to provide a backdrop to help make sense of how participants’ practice had developed and why this was important concerning their identity trajectories.

Firstly, the study found that previous experience and doctoral qualifications played a fundamental role in shaping older academics’ identity trajectories. Secondly, six identity
trajectories were distinguished, and tensions were noted whilst older academics engaged, imagined, and aligned their practice with the broader academic landscape of practice.

6.2.1.1 Previous experience and a doctoral qualification

Early experience was noted as paving the way for identity trajectories. The synthesis of the findings indicates that those early experiences are related to various roles participants have had over the years, but also their doctorate qualifications, for those who had achieved these.

Nevertheless, the findings indicated that holding various entry-level roles prior to entering HE did not affect participants’ identities as academics. These findings have a particular relevance given how both frameworks (CoP and co-participation) view prior experiences. Section 2.3.1.3 discussed Wenger’s (1998) frameworks lack of appreciation for one’s previous experience in a new practice (Billett and Pavlova, 2005). Here it is vital to highlight that Wenger’s earlier work (1998) focused on novice workers, where he did not take any earlier experiences or entry experiences in other fields into account, as this was not his part of the analysis. Wenger’s (1998) salience to considering people’s past history is in understanding the way in which they enacted their practise. In that respect, his earlier work has similarities to academics who saw their PhD and early academic roles as the entry to an academic CoP, rather than any other previous experiences. The analysis of data in this study suggested that academics do not see their entry roles in different sectors as having an impact on their academic identity, as they focus on the experiences being gained within academic communities. This perspective recognises that academics entering and moving between different communities start from each in the position of a novice (James, 2007). In this study, the development of participants’ academic identities appeared to start for them with obtaining doctorate qualifications and roles in the HE sector, and they passionately discussed these experiences in more detail. These findings therefore support Wenger’s (1998) approach not to focus on the value of experiences the participants may have had on engaging with a new academic practice. In this study, the data supports the notion that participants’ academic practice, and thus related identities, started forming from their doctorate qualifications and not their entry level roles in other sectors.
In contrast, for those academics who had professional experiences at more mid-senior and senior levels outside of the HE sector, participants identified with and built on several identities apart from their academic ones. Thus, pre-academic experiences at mid and senior level impacted on participants’ current identities. Equally participants who started their career in a sector other than HE were, nevertheless, somehow related to either teaching, research, or HE institutional leadership practices. Academics’ previous experiences were noted as unique to them, given the length and therefore the breadth and depth of these experiences, which is different to those of younger academics. The participants had had many sub-identities developed over the years. These findings align with the conceptualisation of identity as negotiated in everyday interaction and experience (Archer, 2008). It also aligns with Billett & Pavlova’s (2005) critique of Wenger’s work that indeed previous experience has an impact on one’s identity, before they enter a new CoP, in this case HE-oriented academic CoPs. The participants of the study referred to their previous experiences as having an impact on their current practice, exemplified by Alison who described how her previous experience allowed her to transition into an academic role. Similarly, Lucy talked about during her experiences in a school she was not happy and therefore was content to move away from that community. These previous experiences are therefore an element of participants’ subjectivities in their current roles. Similarly, Billet’s (2004c, 2004a) framework stressed all previous experiences as having an impact on the current practices of workers. This view was echoed by participants who talked about their previous experience (in and outside of the academic community) and how these became an element of their subjectivities and morphed academic identities.

When considering previous experience, there were two routes into academia revealed in the findings. A linear route is understood as a transition encompassing mainly HE academic roles, with possibly entry level roles and consultancies in other sectors. Whereas a nonlinear route encompasses a significant experience within other sectors, including leadership and management roles, before moving on to the academic sector. Several participants had a more linear route to becoming an academic [Fred, Omar, Adam, Eva, Emma]. Becoming an academic is understood as taking on typically academic roles (for example a lecturer, researcher, and teaching within HE sectors). These routes were irrespective of the six identity trajectories or a specific discipline. For example, Fred, Omar and Adam had more linear
routes to academia, having had limited experience at entry level roles in other sectors and a few consultancy projects. Similarly, Eva and Emma had more linear routes to academia, with some initial non-HE teaching experience but no management and or leadership experience. These participants’ identification with problems in the world (section 4.1.1) at a young age formed their mission. Often those ‘problems’ led them to embark on a doctorate journey early on in their career in a relevant discipline. Although it is implicit that they had the free agency to shape their educational career to match their mission, they recognised their discipline and consequently their education and subsequent academic roles as making a career which formed their identity.

There were also those participants who did not have such a linear route. For example, Adam, Matt, Alison and Ian had another career prior to academia within a private sector, including senior level management and leadership positions. Having had an experience outside of the HE sectors, several participants discussed leaving the HE sector for a while to return to it a few years later (4.1.1). Those participants returned to the same identity they previously held, despite the different experiences in-between, such as the identity of a teacher. However, they purposefully expanded that identity by getting relevant qualifications and more experience. Consequently, nonlinear academic careers made participants either realise or reinforce the academic identities they wanted to develop and pursue further.

Both routes are exemplars of paradigmatic trajectories mentioned in Wenger’s framework (1998) and also evidenced in a study of academics across three departments at a research-intensive university (Jawitz, 2009b). Paradigmatic trajectories are visible career paths provided by members of a community that shape how individuals negotiate and engage in a shared experience. In other words, in this context, the way in which one enters an academic community. The findings provided two examples of paradigmatic trajectories. For some academics entering an academic role was linear, for others nonlinear.

The data analysis identified the significance of doctoral qualifications in identity development, which aligns with Henkel (2005) arguing that academic identities are rooted in their doctoral and postdoctoral studies. Similarly, Eddy & Rao (2009) concluded that a doctoral degree allows academics to hold a specific recognised identity in their community.
The data confirmed other literature (e.g. Robinson and McMillan, 2006) that the lack of a doctorate qualification may have an impact on academics’ role trajectories. Academics without doctoral degrees (Alison in this study) might be to a greater or lesser extent more peripheral than central in their academic community, which affects their role trajectory. In this study, data indicated that Alison understood this requisite and therefore perceived executive-level roles at the MET as possible role trajectories to be blocked off. Nevertheless, they felt that despite not having the doctorate qualifications, their experience and skills should be sufficient enough to pursue more senior roles. In particular, she discussed their substantial experience as well as their commitments to students and understanding of the teaching side of an academic role. The official guidelines at the MET confirmed that, although the doctorate is an essential criterion for many senior roles, the MET do not hold a policy that formalises this requirement, instead outlining broader principles of setting requisite qualifications for senior academic role. This information was obtained from a personal communication with an anonymous HR representative at the MET. However, several participants in this study obtained their doctoral qualification at a later stage of their academic career. For example, Zoe and Lucy obtained their doctorates in their late forties, combining their studies with family commitments. When considering the age of the participant without the doctorate, they may be less likely to embark on a long commitment towards a doctoral qualification despite the possible enhancements of her career prospects and access to certain senior roles.

Both previous roles and doctoral qualifications were recognised as factors shaping older academics identity trajectories. The following subsection moves on the discussion to six identity trajectories.

6.2.1.2 The landscape of practice across six identity trajectories

The identity trajectories of the participants as older academics were shaped by both their participation and non-participation in their practice. Overall, the findings align with James (2007), who focused on two ‘old-timers’ without being explicit about the age, but outlined that both held a variety of administrative, teaching and research roles and responsibilities. James suggested that participants may simultaneously belong to multiple communities of
practice that give rise to their hybrid identities. Similarly, the findings of this study outlined a
typology of six identity trajectories centring around teaching, research and institutional
leadership. A list of tasks and projects within each area of practice was collated and marked
against each of the participants to provide a collective picture of what older academic
practice consists of at the MET but, more importantly, to differentiate how individual
participants occupy the broad practice of academia.

Six identity trajectories were clustered and distinguished amongst eleven participants. The
generation of the trajectories presented in Section 4.2 was the result of applying Wenger’s
conceptualisation of identity development as modes of belonging. This conceptualisation of
identity development allowed firstly the identification of different aspects of academics' hybrid identity trajectories, secondly, the charting of their development and thirdly,
explanations to be offered through how academics participated or did not participate and make sense of their three modes of belonging.

These trajectories were:
Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred)
Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)
Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison)
Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar)
Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe)
Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva)

In analysing the unique six trajectories of the participants, the framework of modes of
identification (engagement, alignment and imagination) was used. In his initial work, Wenger
(1998) referred to the framework as modes of belonging, later renamed as modes of
identification (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger - Trayner, 2014). Although Wenger in his work
uses the term identity of non-participation and sets them out concerning engagement, alignment and imagination, these are not elaborated on. Thus, the modes of identification
used by Wenger were expanded in this thesis and the following terms introduced:
unengagement, unalignment and unimagination identification modes. A figure below, Figure
6-1. Wenger’ model of modes of identification (Source, Wenger, 1998, p. 174, Figure 8.1) is
presented to compare it with a new proposed model **Figure 6-2. Proposed model of modes of identification** that introduces a diagram with six modes of identification on a continuum.

The proposed model built on the original by introducing the modes on a continuum.

**Figure 6-1. Wenger’ model of modes of identification (Source, Wenger, 1998, p. 174, Figure 8.1)**

**Figure 6-2. Proposed model of modes of identification**
These three additional modes are a unique contribution of the thesis, because this study supplements a former typology by illustrating several nuances. The typology is supplemented both by the exploration of the new terms (unengagement, unalignment and unimagination) and also by considering participants’ age. These ideas will be further elaborated upon in sections 6.2.1.3 – 6.2.1.5. Wenger’s framework did not involve older workers in general. His primary focus was on novice workers across a range of different sectors, including tailors and midwives (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and experienced claims processors (Wenger, 1998). Although there were a plethora of other studies exploring certain aspects of Wenger’s CoP framework in the context of academics, for instance James and Lokhtina’s (2018) examination of how the boundaries of academic communities can lead to peripheral participation for mid-career academics as newcomers and old-timers. None however, had explored the nuances of the concepts of unengaged, unaligned and unimagined as lying on a continuum. In consequence, the proposed model here is a new contribution which expands Wenger’s model and makes a theoretical contribution to knowledge in the field. In particular, the model proposed is applied in an older academics’ context to explore their identity trajectories. Above all, Wenger suggests that the theory is a conceptual framework to be used as a tool for empirical research by testing its usefulness rather than its truth (Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner, 2016). These nuances will be elaborated upon below.

Together, the six modes of identification captured in Figure 6-1 illustrate the relationship of identity trajectories shaping participants’ practice. The modes of the identifications were recognised as dynamic and on a continuum, rather than being mutually exclusive. Thus, while answering research question one, the study explored the nuances of these modes of identification. Furthermore, there were a lot of unspoken nuances. Therefore, the trajectories were an exploration of new ways of looking at the identification modes of engagement, alignment and imagination. These nuances will be elaborated upon below.
6.2.1.3 On a continuum between engagement and unengagement

The study illustrated the development of competency, investing oneself in relationships with others and the negotiation of a trajectory. Through engagement in practice, participants explored their ability to engage with one another as evidenced by the collaborative nature of the practice. In line with the emerging literature, the participants confirmed that they were engaged with some practices and unengaged with others (Boulton-Lewis and Buys, 2014). In other words, the participants were managing the demands of membership in their landscape of practice (Kubiak et al., 2014). The data recognised a plethora of examples of engagement in practice when academics talked passionately in detail on how they felt about it themselves, even though they were also engaged in other practices. Namely, (in a non-hierarchical order), the data illustrated that, for some participants, research was their passion, others focused on their teaching, while some focused on leadership activities.

It is here that the distinct characteristics of each trajectory were particularly visible as to how they were shaping participants' identities. For example, in Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) some participants focused on research practice and, although they participated in several teaching projects and tasks, showed no real engagement with its processes. In consequence, they spoke very little of their engagement with teaching practice. In contrast, in Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) there were those participants who spoke with a great passion about their teaching and engaged practice of making a real difference to the courses they were producing, yet mentioned very little of their research practice. Similarly, in Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar), participants participated in leadership practices, yet they were unengaged in those tasks. Although these contrasting examples show engagement in different areas, and they align with the broad practice of being an academic, there is a difference in how much they engaged; hence they were at varied places on the continuum between engagement and unengagement. It is here that the study expands on Wenger’s framework by viewing those experiences on this continuum (as represented in Figure 6-2). Placing participants on this continuum exemplifies participants' unengagement, and or little engagement in certain practices, yet alignment with the academic practice. Although Wenger (1998) conceptualises notions of inbound and outbound movements from the community, these concepts are not
developed nor are they exemplified. Whereas this study offers this insight into these concepts explored through the lens of older academics.

In this study, academics retained their identities as teachers, researchers and leaders yet their engagement with some of those practices were limited. Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) and Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) indicated that the participants were aligned but on a continuum towards unengaged. This was evidenced when they participated in teaching tasks but, for instance, did not innovate, make changes based on students’ feedback or speak passionately about their teaching. They were not as engaged in their teaching practices even though they participate in them. Similarly, Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) involved participating in research. As such it encompasses updating participants’ knowledge by reading research to inform their teaching which aligned with research practice, yet the same academics rarely published or conducted research themselves. Therefore, they were not fully engaged as researchers. Overall, the data indicated that participants were not engaged, even though they saw themselves as having a certain identity in relation to these areas.

6.2.1.4 Tensions caused by alignment and unalignment

In general, participants did not talk about practice alignment, but the alignment of their practice was noted in a broad sense (discussed in subsections 4.2.1 - 4.2.6). These observations are similar to Adema and colleagues (2019) who noted that, where engagement in participants' practice was very prevalent, imagination and alignment were less spontaneously mentioned and therefore more difficult to foster. In this study for instance in Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva), participants talked about an act of collaboration that course teams had to do. They all had to work together to create a course. Academics at the MET, all working separately, could not create a course due to the nature of how courses are produced, so they all had to engage and align their efforts. In contrast, most academics talked about the unengaged type of alignment related to administrative tasks. These were, for example, completing forms on time or undertaking necessary institutional training like data protection. These findings
resonate with other studies, whereby participants felt unable to make the practice their own and so they followed the rules, thus aligning their practice but in an uncommitted manner (Kubiak et al., 2014). In other words, academics aligned their practice, but they did so in an unengaged way. In a similar vein, Jerdborg (2020), discussed academic alignment in an unengaged manner, given educational demands, or a broader system of demands of universities in which the academics operate.

In line with the emerging literature, participants confirmed that the individuals’ identities are in constant tension due to demands within their communities (James and Lokhtina, 2018). For example, in Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar), the academic exemplified unalignment with the demands of their faculty, while they continue pursuing a discipline that was not popular in their faculty. Paradoxically, despite the misalignment of the faculty, the academic was recognised for their work by external communities and, eventually, years later, by their faculty. This has particular relevance when considering the age of the participants, as they might have been in the institution long enough to have experienced institutional change. Data in this study demonstrated that these changes can mean that the value of a niche discipline is finally appreciated and recognised. It is worth noting that, although not mentioned in the data, hypothetically an academic could have their expertise recognised and valued initially, but after changes in the culture and business it could become no longer be valued. Nevertheless, the misalignment of academic interests and pursuits with the priorities of the faculty and the institution indicates the need to understand why those tensions arise. Understanding tensions in this area would accommodate both academics in their pursuit of specific researcher identities as well as the institution knowing how to support them. Additionally, from the perspective of the institution, understanding the cause of these tensions could facilitate bottom-up changes driven by academics.

The age of the participants was also reflected in how academics seemed to be able to misalign their practice in a way that could lead to innovations and changes. Across several identity trajectories, academics in senior positions had the authority that allowed them to engage in institutional discussions related to changes in the current practice. For example, in Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) talked about how those academics in leadership positions had the power to change practice as a professor and or a
senior academic. Such misalignment was almost seen by these older academics as their responsibility to challenge the institution with the hope for institutional change.

Another significant finding was that those academics primarily occupying institutional leadership identity trajectories, such as Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) felt no pressure to produce research outputs. The findings suggested that for some academics, research is less focused due to their leadership role. These findings are in contrast to a study by Boyd and Smith, (2016) of lecturers in the health professions, who concluded that academics experience pressure to be engaged in research activities and produce outputs within their sector regardless of academic institutional context or contractual position; in consequence, academics acknowledged the primacy of research work and the researcher identity. In contrast, the findings of this study imply that the MET did not appear to put pressure on non-researching academics to engage with research, allowing academics to take institutional leadership roles and or focus on teaching practices. Similarly non-teaching academics were not pressured to engage with teaching, on the condition that they took institutional leadership roles instead. Thus, a senior level of leadership allowed participants’ to not engage in research or teaching practices, whilst a senior level of teaching allowed participants to not engage in research.

These implications resonate with Benson’s study (2013), who described the constant negotiation between academics’ aspirations and institutional goals. For instance, academics in Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) may have felt deficient or self-aware of the limits to their practices because of their mental model of what an academic should do. Therefore, academics who start leadership trajectories may imagine themselves to be researchers or teachers but, in reality, they may never fully inhabit this researcher or teachers’ identity. In consequence, once academics come to appreciate such a clash, they may change their role or search for other ways to engage in those practices, because they may feel frustrated between the reality and the imagination of their practice.
6.2.1.5 Imagining identities

Moving beyond engagement and alignment, the mode of imagination was significantly present in the data. The analysis of findings indicated several engaged and imagined participants in relation to certain practices, where participants talked about their projects and tasks within these practices with passion and a mission. These were Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) reflecting a researcher identity; Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison), reflecting leader identity; Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva), reflecting engaged and imagined teacher identity.

Although the notion of imagination was referred to in Wenger’s (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014) work and subsequently applied in other empirical studies (Goodnough, 2010; Kwan and Lopez-Real, 2010; Vinson, Simpson and Cale, 2022), Wenger is not very explicit in his account of unimagination. In this study, two academics talked about identities they would not imagine for themselves. In Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison) talked about how she did not see her academic role as a researcher. She did not have the relevant qualifications but also was open about not being interested in getting a doctorate as it was not how she wanted to inhabit her academic identity. Similarly, another two academics Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) discussed how they did not see themselves as leaders, although their colleagues in similar academic roles saw themselves as leaders. These two examples are therefore an exploration of how a mode of unimagination plays a role in how academics do not want to pursue particular academic identities.

What stood out from the data was that all participants referred to research as important to them, even though several of them did not engage regularly with any such tasks and projects. Those participants therefore had an unengaged imagined identity of a researcher. It was important to them, they imagined it, yet they were not engaging actively in research. These findings resonate with other studies suggesting that academics valued their researcher roles (eg. van Winkel et al., 2018). Yet, they contrast with the study of Boyd and Smith (2016)
based on 254 academics in the UK which emphasised that, in professional-oriented higher education, many academics rejected researcher roles as they could not imagine themselves occupying these roles any longer. The authors of the study suggested that the lack of imagination of researcher identity was due to too much focus on research output, rather than research itself. Though, according to a more recent comparative survey, 28% of academics across 19 countries have not published during the last 3 years (Shin and Jung, 2014). Furthermore, in Shin and Jung’s study, although academics reported that they would like to have more time to conduct research, they were not necessarily focused on generating research outputs.

Moreover, several participants imagined themselves as teachers without being engaged in teaching practice (Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison)) or as researchers without being active in research activities (Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)). The imagination in this context was referring to the future trajectory of those participants, thus imagination here is seen as ambition. Participants hoped that at some point in the future they would be able to engage more fully in either teaching or research, indicating these aspects were missing from their current practice. Imagination as a mode of identification was used as a kind of wish or hope for a state in the future, with academics holding a vision of themselves in the future and trying to move towards it highlights the trajectory element of their identity that shaped their practice.

Participants sometimes imagined a future for themselves that could not happen. For example, several participants talked about moving away from leadership practices. Whilst these participants had been inhabiting these roles, their research disciplines changed with time and progress, leaving them without recent experience as a teacher or researchers. In trajectory 2, academics mentioned that they could not publish the things they would have hoped for anymore, as their knowledge was no longer current. Their perception was that the senior role and leadership identity trajectory meant they were trapped and unable to change their future identity trajectory. Similarly, in trajectory 6, academics believed they could not go back to their research as they did not have relevant, up-to-date experience and their field had moved on. In both examples, both the age and senior level of the participant’s role had an impact on how they envisaged their future trajectory, that because of their upcoming
retirement, they did not see a way they could change. Older academics in leadership positions seemed to be self-aware of which future trajectories, in this context, would be possible. It is also at this point that the study explores unique aspects of older academic identity trajectories, that would not be possible in mid-career and young academics, unless possibly fast tracked into leadership positions.

Overall, this study has identified that older academics' identity is constructed and re-constructed over time. When conceptualising this identity negotiation, the notion of a trajectory representing the past, present and future of older academics’ identity is helpful. Past experiences and doctoral qualifications illustrated the breadth of experience encompassing three areas of academic practice. The current practice indicated the focus of the academics at a given time, explored through discussions of engagement and alignment. The notion of imagination highlighted the future projections of their identity trajectories and imagining the community of academics as engaged in research.

Apart from modes of belonging, the evidence showed facets of boundary work amongst academics that shaped academics identity trajectories.

6.2.1.6 Boundary work

In Wenger’s more recent collaborative book (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014), the concepts of boundaries between CoPs across an individual’s landscape of practice were particularly helpful to illuminate the findings. Boundary work refers to traversing, transferring, or aligning practices between CoPs. Boundary work was noted when participants talked about overcoming the cultural discontinuities between different communities.

An example of this boundary work occurred when one participant spoke about their misalignment with the MET yet was recognised by their external disciplinary communities. Eventually, the same academic managed to be noted and thus recognised by the MET for their disciplinary work. Indeed, the literature reminds us that some CoPs promote or accommodate particular identities and not others, and an individual may find that they do not fit in that place (Kubiak et al., 2014). As a consequence of this lack of place, individuals
may encounter personal difficulty, mutual adjustment or exit. Exit in an academic practice, could mean academics resigning, retiring, reducing hours or accepting voluntary redundancy when offered. The concept of mutual adjustment had a particular relevance in this study when considering the age of the participants. Due to the length of time participants had spent constructing their identities, when the broader structure around them change it can do so in a way where their identity becomes aligned with the institutional practice, hence the adjustment rather than an exit. In the data gathered for this study, there was no evidence of exiting being discussed by the participants.

Another finding of the study that was also related to the age of the participants and a general view of boundary work, whereby participants were engaged in transitions across boundaries in the workplace, starting from their previous experience, and current and future work roles. The experience of being in an occupation for a long time provided time for participants to move through different CoPs in their landscape of practice. The findings indicated that participants have moved and focused on different identities and thus different communities throughout their working lives, but also, an understanding that when they look towards the future they may be required to move to different communities. Academics juggle different identities that are ever-changing and evolving throughout their careers. In consequence, these transitions through academic practice were both a source of challenges, when one faced the negotiation of multi-membership and a complex career transition, and a source of resources for the negotiation of the transition and the development of resilience. These conclusions align with the study of students in practice-based education, as they move between academic and workplace communities, and between different communities in their work lives (Fenton-O’Creevy et al., 2014).

6.2.1.7 Conclusion

This section summarised and synthesised findings related to the first question: In what ways is academics’ practice shaped by older academics’ individual identity trajectories through their landscape of practice? To answer this question, I discussed that older academics’ practice is shaped by their unique identity trajectories that are dynamic, shifting and ever evolving. As a result, six unique hybrid identity trajectories were suggested encompassing three broad
dimensions of academic practice: research, teaching and leadership. To explore these trajectories, Wenger’s framework of modes of identification was used and provided a robust framework as a starting point. In context, these trajectories were explored through modes of identification, whereby academics were recognised to be on a continuum of being engaged and unengaged, aligned and unaligned but also imagined and unimagined within their landscape of practice. These identifications reflected the individual’s multi-membership across their landscape of practice resulting in dimensions such as tensions, and marginalisation, but also synergies and preservation of multiple roles. These tensions outline ways in which these trajectories are shaped.

Whilst applying Wenger’s framework was fruitful in viewing the data in the dimensions discussed above, Wenger’s work does not convey the sense of agency in individual identity development (Unwin, Felstead and Fuller, 2004). Therefore, a complimentary framework by Billett (2001, 2004 a,b) was used to consider workplace affordances and individual subjectivities of the academics that further had an impact on older academic identity trajectories. Billett’s framework of affordances and subjectivities (Billett, 2001, 2004a, b) was used to address the two remaining RQs. To this end, the following section will discuss the findings related to the second and third RQs.

6.2.2 Research questions two and three: Affordances and Agency

After analysing how the trajectories of older academics shaped their practice, the second RQ asked, 2. How do the affordances available to older academics’ practice shape their identity? To answer this question, I explored the affordances that provided a blueprint of the structure and processes the participants inhabited. Nevertheless, the main premise of this thesis is that affordances are interrelated with how an individual reacts to affordances (Billett, 2001, 2004 a,b,c). This individual reaction to the structure is referred to as agency in this study. It is worth noting that Billett referred to the notion of agency as subjectivities. The findings indicated that participants reacted to the same structure differently. As I argued in the Chapter 2 2.3.2, Billett’s sociocultural theory of co-participation was selected as the secondary theoretical lens for this study because of its acknowledgement that identity
development is a social and context-dependent construct. Thus, both the context and the way that individuals make sense of this context, should be examined when investigating identity (Billett, 2008). Billett’s theory offers a conceptual framework that views the affordances (structure) and subjectivity (agency) as interdependent. Hence, the choices we make have the potential to change structure. Thus, transformations in the workplace are understood as a product of individuals remaking or reconstituting (transforming) practice. These transformations are not separate from, or conceivable without, individuals’ active involvement and engagement. So, we act not in isolation of structure. The structure is a set of affordances that can constrain and/or enable an agentic action. This lens explicitly acknowledges that development in academic practice results from the intersection of two reciprocal processes - one being the way workplaces afford participation in practices and the other being the way the individual chooses to engage in those practices. Thus, to answer the second research question I will also include the answers for the third research question, which asks 3. How does the individual agency of older academics impact on their identity development?

The experiences of the older academics in this study support Billett’s (2006, 2008) framing of identity development, that involves examining both affordances and agency. Hence, the projects within one’s practice are enabled and constrained by work practices as well as the individual’s choice to engage or not engage in with those projects. The results of this study add to Billett’s collaborative work with colleagues (Billett and Somerville, 2004; Billett and Pavlova, 2005; Billett, Smith and Barker, 2005) by providing empirical data that shows how the principles of co-participation apply in the context of older academics.

In order to aid understanding while summarising the complex findings in Chapter 5, a table has been created. Using the table and specific terms is a way to add clarity in presenting the findings, rather than introducing a new analysis framework. A synthesis of these findings is presented below in Table 6.1 **Typology of interrelated relationship between** Affordances and Agency enactment. The table presents the interdependent relationship between structure and agency, which provides a summary of the implications for identity trajectories. These implications are concluded in three broad relationships, whereby being agentic is perceived by the way of structure.
These three broad relationships are:

- **Adaption**: taking on, internalising and assimilation practices; whereby an academic becomes a part of the structure without room for further development. For example, an academic adopts to the way courses are created and works in collaboration with other academics to create courses.

- **Rejection**: becoming unengaged in the practice, with the potential to resign or exit the structure. For example, several academics in the study did not agree with the new strategy of the senior MET team, thus becoming unengaged in the changes proposed. While this was not observed in this study, rejection could even lead to academics leaving the institution.

- **Change**: innovating, whereby an academic challenges and changes the structure. For example, an academic who engages in innovative research, brings funding and makes a difference in their field.

These relationships will be referred to in the subsections below in italics. The evidence in how these dynamics shape and impact older academics’ individual identity trajectories will be elaborated on in the subsections 6.2.2.1- 6.2.2.5 below to answer both RQs. Moreover, these three proposed relationships have resonance with another study exploring the significance of both structure and agency within individual lives and dispositions, and within the workplaces they inhabit. Namely, Hodkinson et al (2004)’s theoretical discussion proposed four overlapping types of interaction between individual and workplace context. These are: 1. Prior abilities and experiences, 2. Individual dispositions, 3. Ways in which individuals contribute to the (re)construction of workplace cultures and practices, and 4. Ways in which learning and participation in work contributes to the construction and development of learner/worker identity. These four relationships had huge presence in the data of this study. Section 6.2.1.1 outlined the first relation - prior abilities and experiences - whereas the subsection below will resonate with the other three relationships suggested by Hodkinson et al (2004). Instead of using Hodkinson’s model of the relationship between agency and structure, the extra layer of analysis in this study presents three broad relationships (Adapt, Reject, Change). The framework is used only to add clarity and understanding to the results, rather than introducing a new model.
In general, the relationship that is evidenced most clearly is the expression of agency of change, followed by adaption, and rejection.
Table 6.1 Typology of interrelated relationship between Affordances and Agency enactment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordance that either enable and or restrict older academic’s identity trajectories</th>
<th>Agency enactment:</th>
<th>Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred)</th>
<th>Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)</th>
<th>Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison)</th>
<th>Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar)</th>
<th>Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe)</th>
<th>Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic freedom</strong> in the engagement with tasks and projects across the landscape of practice, and working patterns</td>
<td>- <em>Adaptation</em>, thus assimilation of current practice without room for further development</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- <em>Rejection</em>, whereby an academic resigned, exited it, and became unengaged</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- <em>Change</em>, thus innovation whereby an academic challenge and changes the structure</td>
<td>Change</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recognition</strong> that enables and restricts opportunities for practice engagement, work promotion available to those recognised</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reject</td>
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<td>Reject</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong> as a relational dynamic across participants’ landscape of practice</td>
<td>Reject (Fred) Change</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Adapt Reject (Zoe) Change</td>
<td>Adapt Reject (Adam) Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reject (Fred) Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adapt Reject (Lucy) Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong> to reflect on previous experience and observe others</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Adapt Change</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Adapt Reject</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapt Reject</td>
<td>Change</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Values and motivations</strong> in relation to participants commitment to students, public debate and aligning with the MET values</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Adapt Reject (Emma)</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Adapt Reject (Lucy)</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Adapt Reject (Emma)</td>
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Below, some of the interdependencies and implications are explored further. The order of these interdependencies is related to the frequency with which these were noted in the data. Above all, the synthesis of the findings below related to identified affordances will focus foremost on experiences of older academics rather than all academics in general. Affordances identified in this study were: Perceived academic freedom, Recognition Collaboration driven by a specific practice, Time to develop practice, Values and missions.

6.2.2.1 Perceived academic freedom

The most frequent affordance the participants referred to was their academic freedom. These broad findings align with several other studies, such as Henkel's (2005) who discusses the value of academic freedom in being free to choose and pursue one's own research agenda and being trusted to manage the pattern of one's own working life and priorities. Similarly, Winter (2009), discussed a long tradition of autonomy and academic freedom, identifying these as essential elements of the development of academic identities. In this study, the affordances of academic freedom itself created a sense of autonomy in which the academics exercised agency to develop their own work.

Academics talked about freedom in relation to the choices they were able to make about the directions of their academic practice. In other words, academics had freedom of choice in the trajectories they could take. These were reflected by six different trajectories, discussed earlier. It is also here that a connection can be made between academic freedom and their academic sense of professional expertise. Some participants who focused on one practice, like Trajectory 5: A teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison). There were also academics who exercised their agency by focusing on a hybrid identity such as Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva). Nevertheless, certain trajectories seem to have more freedom and autonomy than others. This is particularly interesting in light of the work of Boyd and Smith, (2016), which also focused on identity development across the academic landscape of practice. Their study suggested that some academics juggle several practices at once, whilst others focus on one or two. They point out
that a proportion of academics (in health professional fields) struggled to combine researcher practice with the time commitments for other areas of their practice. In some cases, the agency of the individual academic appears to be significant in choosing this pathway but in some cases, institutional mediation and expectations influenced their decision.

In this study, when comparing different areas of practice, participants felt they had variable autonomy in choosing and following their interests. Academics whose trajectory was described as engaged researchers Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar) and Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), indicated freedom by pursuing and developing further their research identity. This was in contrast to participants of teaching Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva). The direction of a research career can be very individual even though research itself is carried out with other people. Therefore, an academic whose practice mainly encompasses research gives the impression that they have the freedom to exercise their agency to change their practice. They change their practice by agency enactment in primarily focusing on research practice, almost buying themselves out of teaching. In such situations academics would have to teach as much as their colleagues. Although the analysis of findings of working patterns revealed that academics at the MET negotiate the time for their individual practices, each academic had a contract in which they had obligations to a certain amount of teaching and research. Thus, they almost reject the teaching practice by focusing on their research and being unengaged in the teaching practice.

Section 1.4 discussed literature on the pressures of accountability introduced through frameworks such as the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF). Surprisingly, in this study, academics spoke very little about the REF requirements, and the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) was not something that was current at the time of the data collection. Only two academics [Omar, Alan] mentioned the REF in passing thus the agentic expression of adaption when looking for bids and publications, although having no real impact on their academic freedom. This finding is in contrast to a study by Boyd & Smith, (2016), whereby academics showed awareness to varying extents of the pressure for research activity and outputs within the HE, within their institution, and within their department and role. Similarly, the academics of this study did not speak of a pressure to focus on research identity.
and therefore the discouragement of the development of teaching identity. These conclusions contrast a study of academics in Hong Kong by Thomas et al. (2011) suggesting that publication pressure may discourage academics from taking an active interest in practice development for teaching.

All in all, in this study, the relationship between the affordance of freedom and agency was predominantly related to change, as academics were free to engage, develop and change current practices with lots of freedom and thus have an impact on the current development in their disciplines. Researching academics had a lot of freedom given the fundamental principles of the MET were striving to enhance collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches.

In contrast, participants whose trajectories encompassed teaching and or leadership experienced less freedom, as these practices were perceived to be embedded within the wider structures of institutional requirements and policies. Therefore, their agency enactment was of adaptation, as they were less autonomous than in their research practice. For instance, academics in Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva) talked about a degree of freedom when considering course creation. Their practice had to adapt to adhere to course creation cycles and quality, although they were able to make choices and change their pedagogy and to some extent the people with whom they worked on these courses. In consequence, the relationship between the affordance of freedom in teaching identity trajectories would be of adaptation and assimilation, with a certain degree of development. These contrasting results suggest that developing research identities fosters more freedom than teaching and leadership identities. Other studies comparing areas of academic practice also suggested that academics spoke of their development as a researcher as positive and relatively untroubled.

6.2.2.2 Recognition

In tandem with having a lot of freedom, the second most talked about affordance was recognition, which can be defined as being socially legitimatised by colleagues of the same community (Leibowitz, Ndebele and Winberg, 2014). The study found that being recognised
by others facilitated identity development by creating an opportunity for further engagements, such as being invited to give a keynote or being approached by colleagues to collaborate in projects. Such affordances foster academics’ development of an identity as an expert in their respective discipline. Although academics talked about recognition across all three practices (teaching, research and institutional leadership), these invitations enabled different opportunities for identity development.

In relation to research, other studies remind us that those who publish in journals are perceived as having secured membership to a particular category of academics (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012), associated with successful and elitist identities (Jack and Lorbiecki, 2007; Ybema, Vroemisse and van Marrewijk, 2012). These memberships sometimes allowed them to avoid certain projects. In this study two academics, Alan and Omar, were recognised ‘elite’ researchers due to their publication success (see Section 5.1.1). Alan called himself, “one of the better research performers” and was able to exercise his agency by changing the current practice and negotiating for more time to focus on research. The participant felt that he had earned the agency to change the norms in how academic contracts at the MET operated. In contrast, younger inexperienced academics would not have the same affordances available to them compared to more established, older academics. This is not to say that mid-career academics would not be in a position where they are recognised, but if we compare younger academics with older ones, there will be a contrast as to what an affordance of recognition enables older academics to engage with. For instance, most recently, a fast-track route to recognition has been noted by academics who have been using social media; these ‘celebrity’ academics and influencers can harness the affordance of recognition (Varady et al., 2019). However, the literature is still lacking in how these practices affect traditional teaching and research contract arrangement, or how these new trends may impact contracts those academics are able to negotiate within their workplaces.

A distinction between internal and external recognition was noted in relation to one of the academic’s experiences. Omar talked about being recognised for his practice by colleagues in his external disciplinary landscape of practice, whereas the MET did not recognise his outputs. Nevertheless, he rejected the approach of the MET and continued with his practice, albeit outside of the MET.
Apart from the recognition prevalent among research focused academics, teaching academics Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) also remarked on being able to exercise their agency in changing and innovating their practice. Similarly, they expressed that given their experience and being reliable in their approach, they had freedom in being involved in the courses and pedagogy they wanted to.

Recognition in the leadership trajectory was interpreted as being relied upon by their faculty to reject and change pressing issues by engaging in relevant discussions and actions. Hence, participants on a leadership trajectory’s (Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma)) engagement in certain activities was almost expected of them, as they were recognised for being able to have an impact that others in less recognised roles could not. This view of the relationship between affordance and agency is significant as the activity of the participants to change current practice is an expectation by others, rather than their own choice.

Moreover, earlier when I discussed perceived freedom in practice, the findings highlighted that agency was exercised by negotiating and changing their practice given their recognition and what they are known for being good at. In this way, the affordance of freedom was connected to the affordance of recognition. The data suggested that recognition gave participants the freedom to pick and choose between events and collaborations to which they were invited. In other words, given their recognition and experience, academics either embraced opportunities and harnessed them or rejected them. Both responses have an impact on their identities. For example, academics discussed external recognition where they were invited to collaborate or give a keynote lecture. These experiences reaffirmed their research (Omar) and leadership identities (Alan, Matt). Being recognised also meant new job opportunities. Academics talked about being approached by external institutions Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and headhunted Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma), but also being offered internal promotions Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred). New job opportunities foster the development or reaffirmation of their respective identities. These findings might be unique given the age of academics as, the older academics get, the more experience and
potentially more opportunities for being recognised they have. Recognition of the potential benefits of older academics’ skills and expertise, and their need for an ongoing interface with academia, supports Koopman-Boyden and Macdonald (2003)’ literature review. Their article reviewed the literature on ‘successful ageing’ and the performance of older workers in general, given stereotypes of age-related decline in work performance. My study offers empirical evidence in support of Koopman-Boyden and Macdonald's (2003) literature review paper, corroborating the idea that the affordance of new opportunities for engagement and career progression through such recognition is significant for older academics.

Moreover, there was a difference in recognition related depending on identity trajectory. Academics whose identity trajectories focused on research and leadership (these were trajectories 1,2,3,4) were more frequently invited to make contributions beyond the MET. In contrast, those academics whose identity trajectories focused more on teaching (Trajectory 5 and 6) were recognised more often by their internal MET colleagues, and thus invited, for instance, to collaborate on courses. Hence, research and leadership trajectories are outward looking, whereas teaching is an inward-looking trajectory when it comes to recognition.

All in all, the interdependence between older academics’ agency and the institutional structure is highlighted when considering recognition. The affordance of recognition enables older academics more opportunities, which then begets further beneficial opportunities, such as conference speaking invitations, requests to collaborate on research papers, or new job opportunities. Agency is employed by academics to make changes but also to reject, whereby they can develop and reaffirm their identities further or they may decide not to engage with the new affordances at all. Experiences discussed so far in the context of older academics are therefore powerfully supported by Billett’s (2002) theory of co-participation in terms of the interrelationships between the individual, social, and contextual elements. The following subsection summarises issues of power that have affinity with the affordance of recognition.
6.2.2.2.1 Power

There were several examples of power inequalities that were noted in the findings that had an impact on the participants’ identity trajectories.

The findings discussed the case of Omar’s prior work experiences and how he struggled to engage with a discipline which he felt was new and niche. Instead, it was suggested that he engaged with another, more established, discipline and maintain a low-profile in the departmental community. Such experiences challenged Wenger’s (1998) views on peripheral participants as influential members in the community’s development. In contrast, Omar was required to align their disciplinary research areas to that of the faculty. Luckily, his contributions to the ‘niche’ discipline was recognised by external communities. Although Omar did not see this experience as an obstacle which affected his further development, other studies explain that such barriers could potentially shape participants learning practices, and it would have an impact on their identity development (Billett 2004). Such hierarchal distributions of power influencing access to the preferred disciplinary practices were not noted however when academics discussed their current practices. They did discuss however, lack of time as a reason for why they could not engage with the research they wanted to.

Another broader observation of power was noted, given their recognised position, was that participants were encouraged to support and or lead on bottom-up changes. This was noted when, for instance, Alan described himself as an influential academic who had more power during senior leadership meetings as opposed to other lecturers in lower positions. In consequence Alan was put forward by their colleagues to make their voices heard about the status quo on various issues. Similarly, the findings show how the collective agency of senior academics through solidarity acted as a force of power against the threat of impending university reforms. Thus, having a senior role meant they had the power to challenge changes and try to alter the structure. The recognised positions and seniority gave them the power to challenge those in more senior positions.

Having discussed some broad issues of power in the findings in relation to participants affordance of recognition, the following section will discuss collaboration.
6.2.2.3 Collaboration driven by a specific practice

The affordance of collaboration was evidenced as a fundamental enabler for the development of participants’ practices. Academics expressed their agency through engagement in collaborative practice across all trajectories. Both theoretical frameworks (CoP and co-participation) outlined in Section 2.3, positioned the development of academic practice within social context. The findings of this study align with other studies highlighting the significance of a collegial and supportive workplace environment as well as disciplinary networks (Martin, Lord and Warren-Smith, 2020). Martin et al.’s (2020) study focused on 30 academics in the UK working together on the design and delivery of new degree courses. Their study aligns with my study as both evidence academics shaping their identities by participating in and interacting with others to engage with their practices. The evidence in my study suggested that working with a variety of different colleagues provided opportunities for developing the negotiating, networking, and leading skills necessary for success in teaching, research, and leadership identity trajectories. Being acknowledged as a collaborator on a project enabled academics [exemplified by Ian and Lucy] to adapt by strengthening their identities as researchers and teachers through cultivating new relationships. Furthermore exercising agency by adapting to the ways of collaborative practice provided a sense of belonging, acceptance, and legitimacy within the wider discipline community evidenced by Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe). These implications align with other studies, when it comes to feeling supported and respected by their colleagues. For instance, a literature review by Lankveld et. al (2017) pointed out that emotional and practical support shared between academics as an important aspect of their practice.

Above all, through collective agentic action, such as working together on projects, engaging in discussions, or obtaining funding, participants of this study worked together to develop and inform their current discipline. Such reaffirmed their identity trajectories as researchers, teachers, and experts in their disciplines. In consequence, these findings align with other research that highlighted how the affordance of collaboration shapes the development of
identity trajectories (Leibowitz, Ndebele and Winberg, 2014). The participants’ strong identification with research and scholarship translated into a focus on intensive applied research that stressed collaboration and the practical implications of their research across disciplines. The evidence in this study referred to inquiry as a way to highlight agency enactment through seeking new ideas, methods, and connections across research areas and avenues, building new relationships between fields by ongoing questioning and novelty. This enactment of agency by changing and innovating practice through critical thinking, debate and problem-solving was evidenced in research and teaching identity trajectories. These trajectories were Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar), Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva). The development of leadership practice was, however, noted as scaffolded by collaboration and previous experience (exemplified in section 5.2.1 and 5.3.3) by Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) and Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader (Alison).

Despite most academics talking about collaboration in research, there was a nuanced picture when considering participants’ engagement in research practice. The findings indicated that, although most of the participants intentionally and proactively developed and maintained relationships with colleagues, students, and other like-minded professionals, several participants choose to work in research practices on their own. Therefore, they rejected the usual collaborative type of engagement in their practice. This was evidenced by Fred, Adam, Zoe across different identity trajectories. Although their practice in isolation may have led to the development of their research identities, it could also have a restrictive impact on their view of their discipline. The participants whose research practice indicated individual endeavours justified it by focusing on the level of concentration that was only possible when working in isolation. This was especially vital for them so close to their retirement, when participants perceived that they had limited time to devote to their research. Thus, they felt that working in solitude on their research would reduce the stress and free them from the stress of working in collaboration. These reflections on distractions caused by collaborative work were also noted in the study mentioned earlier (Leibowitz, Ndebele and Winberg, 2014).
These reflections were in contrast to the way of teaching at the MET, which was presented as inherently collaborative. Although academics worked on individual sections within courses, they saw the process of course creation in terms of collaborative practice. Thus, participants had no option to choose working alone when it came to teaching. Instead, the academics had to adapt and assimilate. Furthermore, the exercise of agency in research (change) and teaching (adapt) practice in relation to collaborative practice reflected individual and social aspects of identity creation. On the one hand, academics can develop some of their identities, such as researchers, whether they work in collaboration or not. On the other hand, the development of certain identities, such as teaching identities, had to take place in a community as teaching practice in isolation was not available at the MET.

6.2.2.4 Time to develop practice

The affordance of time to develop practice through reflection and observation was also perceived as a fundamental aspect in the development of participants’ practice and hence identity trajectories. Time here is conceptualised as the time participants have spent engaging in their roles, rather than a specific time for them to sit and reflect. Given the academics’ ages, they had had a lot of time in their roles and various experiences over the years.

The data showed clear evidence of reflection and transformation, with academics noticing that they were in the process of change in response to their developing practice. The evidence suggested that the affordance of time enabled academics to exercise their agency according to how confident they felt about their developing practice for instance, from being an observer of other’s practices to adapting practice norms. When academics were confident in the practice they were able to adapt to and challenge obstacles. In other words, time allowed them to draw on their own experience, observations, and learnings on the job to enhance their professional learning and deepen understanding of their practice, which scaffolded their professional identities. Such feelings were reflected by all participants across trajectories. The affordance of time enabled participants to feel self-assurance as professionals that could have an impact on their practice. This was evident when participants talked about how they felt. The participants interpreted their experiences and agency to
learn from those experiences as part of their own personal learning trajectory. Through reflecting on these experiences they were able to develop their identities as leaders, teachers and researchers.

On the other hand, some academics saw an excess of time to figure things as a sign of a lack of scaffolding and support from the MET. Nevertheless, although Lucy and Alan talked about time to exercise their agency and figure things out in their roles, they also saw this affordance as trust from the MET that they were able to do their job without much guidance.

6.2.2.5 Values and missions

The final subtheme noted in the findings was the affordance of values and missions.

Contact with students was described as strengthening academics’ identities, which was universal to all participants. This finding is supported by other studies (Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014; Lankveld et al., 2017). These findings assert a direct link, a meeting of values, between the MET’s identity, which focuses on students’ experiences, and the participants’ identities of being committed to students. The participants were outspoken in making this link, suggesting their alignment and thus adaptation of practice to the mission of the MET. To put these findings in context, the MET’s mission promotes social justice and educational opportunity by providing high-quality university education.

Academics’ individual feelings of pride and satisfaction resulted from their work with students and wider impact on public debate. For example, in Lucy’s description, it can be recognised that she was inspired by the success of her new practices and felt committed to continually improving her strategies for helping students achieve their goals. In addition, she was affirmed by other teachers who began to follow her lead. All this has implications for developing teaching practices. A similar example was evident in developing leadership identities when Emma talked about developing her skills by observing others. Significantly, Lucy and Emma both spoke about how they exercised their agency in focusing on maximising the face-to-face interactions with students. They described missing this element of academic work, given the particular nature of the MET distance learning context. Thus, they almost
rejected the current set up and actively sought out opportunities to have more face-to-face contact time with the students.

This study reports that academics feel strongly committed to students, demonstrated by desires to produce the best courses possible and by providing extra support to doctoral students during supervision. Participants felt that engagement in these activities made a positive impact on students’ journeys and the wider society. In consequence, this mission of supporting students’ journeys strengthened academics’ identity trajectories. In this study, there are several examples of academics carefully considering how students will respond to their teaching styles and trying to think proactively about how to navigate developing a course to particular requirements. Adam, Eva and Lucy discussed in particular how developing a good course feels like the best contribution they can make. In consequence, academics felt appreciated but also challenged to develop the best practice they could, leading to job satisfaction. Similar to the findings of Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, (2014), participants felt strong commitment to students and they suggested always putting students’ needs and journeys at the forefront of their practice. Moreover, Billett and Somerville (2004) remind us that passion and commitment to one’s work becomes part of one’s sense of self and has an impact on an individual’s subjectivities in how they respond to their workplace.

Based on the results of this study, aspects of academics’ individual ontogenies, such as values, goals, and beliefs around their practice, as well as knowledge and skills, played a significant role in the development of their identities. The positive role played by students in enhancing a lecturer’s identity can be attributed to the interplay between affordances and agency, in the sense that the students who were here to learn but also challenge their lecturers were a part of the elements that a lecturer had to respond to. There needed to be a sense of fit between students’ aspirations and interests, and those of the academics. The agency enactment in response to these students, shaped identities as teachers and supervisors.

Apart from the focus on students, participants’ agency enactment was noted in relation to public debate. Six participants across several identity trajectories evidenced how they
changed their practice to influence others to engage in discussions. This behaviour was seen in Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma), Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher (Omar), Trajectory 5: Teacher (Lucy, Zoe) and Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva). In Adam’s example, he felt that being engaged in the wider debates related to his discipline aligned with his values and how he saw the responsibility of the academic practice. The essence of alignment of personal values, institutional values, and disciplinary practices supports Billett and Somerville (2004) argument that the individual, and who they are, powerfully affects the nature and direction of one’s practice development and their identity.

Apart from student and public debate, the findings also report that the values of the senior team were clashing with the values of the participants. Participants described how certain senior members at the MET were trying to fundamentally change the way the MET operated. In response, some academics wanted to leave, following their colleagues’ footsteps, as they felt a lack of communication with the senior management. They rejected the proposed changes and were debating whether to exit the workplace. Other academics in this study, alternatively, [Emma, Adam] banded together to challenge proposed changes. In the face of a problem, colleagues can come together and try to find solutions and opportunities for constructive rather than confrontational dialogue, which harnessed the power of academic relationships. Another response was exemplified by Eva, who adapted to the top-down changes despite her disappointment at how the MET was changing. Eva in particular indicated a hunger for development in challenging circumstances. Eva spoke about adapting and focusing her priorities on tasks and projects she had autonomy over during the time of internal structural changes. These findings support those of Beech et al (2011), who cautioned against taking an essentialist stance toward an identity as distinct and externally recognised, and reminded us that ‘In changeful situations, identities can be expressed in multiple ways simultaneously’ (p.293). Thus, while positions and context change, identities can remain ‘in-process and ambivalent’ (ibid, p.293). Thus, contextual influences on identity formation and tensions between identities may not be resolvable but may nonetheless be productive. In consequence, although Eva recognised academic voices were ignored in relation to certain changes, she could refocus and develop other aspects of her practice at a time when other academics were either challenging the changes or leaving the MET. These
findings also lend support to Clegg’s (2008) speculation about the porous boundaries of higher education and the development of alternative identities that contemporary academics may have the opportunities to develop. The reason to single out the response given by Eva to the institutional changes is to highlight that she felt no pressure coming from her role to challenge the top-down decisions. In contrast, several other academics Trajectory 1: Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred) and Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher (Matt, Emma) within the leadership identity trajectory felt professional solidarity and the concentration of senior positions as a force of power against the threat of impending university reform. Thus, having a senior role almost required them to reject the changes and challenge them to try and alter the structure. These expectations may not be placed on academics in a lower hierarchal position. Nevertheless, those academics accepted the challenge and were keen to influence top managers and facilitate accommodation through active efforts, which triggered the change. These findings align with another study of resistance, wherein resisters were able to influence top management’s decisions and produce eventual change (Courpasson, Clegg and Clegg, 2012). These findings were an example of the interdependence of structure and agency, as the responses to the top-down reforms and subsequent engagement from the academics were varied, depending on their particular perspectives on the situation. These findings corroborate the trends outlined in the literature review of academic identities of university teachers by Lankveld et al., (2017). Their literature review indicated that institutional factors, such as introducing new initiatives, goals, directions, and policies at their institution may especially influence academic identities when considering their responsibilities and practices.

6.2.2.6 Conclusion about the focus on affordances and agency

This section summarised and synthesised findings related to the second and third RQ: 2. How do the affordances available to older academics’ practice shape their identity? And 3. How does the individual agency of older academics impact their identity development?

To answer these questions, I discussed affordances as well as how academics respond to these affordances. The co-participation framework offered by Billett (2001, 2004a) helped to illuminate the dynamics between the affordances, in other words, the structure, and the way
how academics responded to this structure, which has an impact on older academics’ identity trajectories.

Therefore, from this study, we get a more refined understanding of specific affordances shaping older academics practice that have an impact on identity trajectories. These affordances were perceived academic freedom, recognition, collaborative practice, time, and values and missions. Overall, the affordances discussed were enablers for practice engagement, by offering developmental opportunities, creating further participatory practices to engage with, challenging academics, and allowing time for reflection. Equally those affordances created barrier for the participants’ practice development, for example, a lack of recognition in a specific disciplinary practice or a clash of values. Along with these affordances I narrowed down how academics exercised their agency to three ways: adaptation, rejection and change. In result, the three ways of the enactment of agency evidenced an impact on participants identity trajectories. The most notable of these three responses was agency enactment through change, such as, exercising agency to engage in tasks and projects that aligned with the academics’ passions. Engagement in these projects and tasks enabled participants to develop and reinforce their identities. The second most noted enactment of agency was through adaption. For instance, exercising agency by adapting and aligning to the mission of the MET in regard to commitment to students and the engagement in public debate. These types of experience had an impact on participants’ identities as they felt appreciated but also challenged to develop the best practice they could, leading to job satisfaction. The least noted agency enactment was through the rejection of affordances. For example, despite the collaborative nature of research practice, two academics rejected these norms and chose to work in isolation. Their preferred way of working was justified by distractions they felt while working in collaboration. Thus, the impact of rejecting the norm of collaborative practice was producing single authored outputs, which did not hinder in any way the development of their researcher identity.

Having explored the answers to the three research questions of the study, the following section considers study implications.
6.3 Implications

The previous section summarised research intentions and synthesised the findings concerning the research questions of this study. This section will discuss the implications of this study for academics and, professional development policies. As an analytic generalisation from this ethnographic study, there are implications for the practice and continuing professional development of older academics.

6.3.1 Academics

One audience for this study is other academics, regardless of age and experience. Three study implications for this audience are suggested below.

First, the six identity trajectories established in this study show that inhabiting the role of an older academic can mean different practices for each individual. The data suggested a variety of practices ranging from leadership and research to teaching. Distinguishing multiple identities of older academics (such as researcher, imagined researcher, teacher, and institutional leader), and sub-identities (such as networker, broker, advocate of social justice or advocate of knowledge exchange) could influence thinking about the different characteristics of an academic career, especially for those who are early- or mid-career. Considering their various identities may guide academics in their professional development or help steer the aspirations of a potential academic in the dynamic context of the HE sector. Equally, older academics could relate to specific trajectories and anticipate potential challenges and ways of navigating through their remaining career, as well as simply relating their own experiences and reflections to those of their other older colleagues. There is something powerful in being able to share the same stories, including successes and challenges, with others.

Second, for several academics in this study, the conversation about potential retirement was almost seen as a promised land when they will be able to focus on developing their preferred identities, such as a teacher or a researcher (as discussed in this study by imagined identities
of Alan and Emma). This study only looked at academics who were still in full-time employment and given the trends of prolonged retirement discussed in Section 1.2, those academics could remain in employment past retirement age anyway. The data highlighted that being away from research practice created a huge hurdle to go back to as an active engaged researcher rather than just an imagined researcher. Following a break, academics almost have to reinvent themselves. Keeping this in mind, academics who start to feel that they are unengaged researchers could ensure they remain active in research despite time constraints. Therefore, the implications of this study could encourage younger and older academics to be more pro-active in negotiating time to maintain their preferred identities.

Third, apart from thinking about the complexities around multiple identity trajectories, this study focuses academics' attention on affordances. The concept of affordances in a workplace, and how one responds to those affordances, indicates the varying effects on the development of older academic identities. For instance, the affordances noted in this study describe participants' workplaces as collaborative, responsive to recognition and fostering autonomy. The study then explored the ways in which academics respond to those affordances that have an impact on their practice. Academics could reflect on these affordances and consider if and how they translate to their own practice. This would allow them to understand how such affordances could impact their identity trajectories options for agentic enactments. They could also reflect on their own workplace to gauge what are there are affordances available to them that would either inhibit or enable the development of their practice. Having established what those affordances are, they could reflect on how their agentic enactment affects their own identity trajectories.

### 6.3.2 Policies focused on professional development

Understanding the complexities and varied nature of older academic trajectories may help to focus on possible developmental opportunities of academics at various stages of their career. By demonstrating different career paths, this study offers insights for line managers of academics and those engaged in career development planning with academics, as well as Higher Education Institutions (HEI) responsible for the development of academics across
different levels of academia. As mentioned earlier, space for reflection and coaching would allow academics to focus on their identity development and criteria for promotion.

First, the findings of this study highlighted the freedom possessed by older academics in tasks and projects. However, for some academics, freedom was described in terms of the trust which they received from their managers. Nevertheless, managers’ understanding the complexities of the employees they manage could help facilitate and broaden potential progression in their trajectories. Therefore, this study helps to inform different types of individual and managerial strategies that aim to develop academic practice. At an institution and a policy level, provisions could be made for academics to explore identity trajectories that are otherwise blocked off for them. For example, having understood that academics who focus on leadership lose touch with the research side of their practice, managers could encourage leaders and give them time to engage with research practice. Similarly, academics who focus on teaching have very limited time for empirical research, thus their research identity was imagined rather than engaged. Encouraging those focused on one identity trajectory academics (teachers or leaders) to broaden their practice could help them engage with tasks they are passionate about but have no time to engage in without permission.

In addition, maintaining focused identity trajectories can have a detrimental effect on the view of academic roles. The data distinguished six identity trajectories, whereby only two practices could realistically be combined, for example, Researcher and Institutional Leader (Alan, Fred), Researcher and Teacher (Omar) and Teacher and Leader (Adam, Ian, Eva). Thus, none of the trajectories encompassed all three elements. The challenge comes here with the amount of work involved in each of those practices, however maintaining silos of academic practices in such a way risks damaging the view of the holistic role of an academic. Additionally, maintaining focused identity trajectories risks challenges for academics when they want to change jobs, as they would have to look for similar roles encompassing the identity trajectories they have had in previous institutions. Professional development and policies could explore ways to maintain all three practices in a role or at least to strive to maintain two.

Second, the findings indicated that leadership trajectories had a strong element of collaboration and networking as affordances scaffolding the leadership practice. These affordances seemed like the main way for academics to develop leadership skills. Thus, there
is a need for formalised upskilling of collaboration and networking practices. The academics spoke about their research qualifications and the development of their teaching practice, but their leadership practice was mainly developed on the job. Both academic research and teaching practice has a very rigorous element of peer review, benchmarking, and students' expectations in terms of quality allowing academics to develop their practice and identities. Yet, the leadership practice in academia does not seem to have such an element at a senior level, although some academics did talk about mentoring, coaching and developmental courses at less senior levels. Therefore, this study highlighted the gap in training and nurturing the skills necessary for leaders, where policies could address those gaps. However, those leaders need to understand both the values of the universities as well as leadership challenges. Thus, professional development and policymakers should focus on the value of training academic leaders for both academic empathy as well as expertise in leadership skills to successfully manage and lead projects and teams.

Third, the findings also highlighted tensions when considering academic researcher identities being recognised by external communities that paradoxically were not recognised and therefore were unaligned with the MET's research expectations. Although this finding referred to the participant's previous experiences and thus occurred during their early career, it highlights those institutions that should enable academics to pursue research avenues that are unaligned with the current trends and practices of their institutions. Although most academics expressed autonomy in their research interests in their current practice, the provisions for autonomous research could focus on novice academics.

Fourth, this study explored agency enactment across six identity trajectories mapped out against five academic affordances. The evidence indicated the impact these had on the identity trajectories of the academics in adapting, rejecting and changing the affordances available. The policymakers and professional development staff could harness these findings to think about how they could utilise such affordances for academics to have a positive experience that enhances rather than hinders their practice development. Similarly, using the framework in a similar way as in this study could help in recognising other affordances that have implications for identity trajectories. These will be different at every institution, as well as at different career stages (entry academic, mid-career, post-retirement) and identity trajectories. Recognising and understanding affordances and how academics exercise their
agency in institutions would help to understand issues hindering their development and challenges which they may be facing.

Having suggested practical implications of this study to academics, researchers and policy and professional developers, the following section focuses on the limitation of this study.

6.4 Limitations

As with the application of any research method, this study had limitations which should be noted and considered.

The first limitation considers sampling. The sample consisted of eleven participants. Whilst this allowed for a deep analysis of individual participants, not all areas and circumstances of the practice of older academics within the MET settings were covered by the participants in the dataset. There were particularities about the MET which I later found out were not mentioned by the participants. For instance, when discussing the context for the course production, the participants talked about collaboration and being able to choose which academics they worked with on their course teams. What was not mentioned in the data set, but that I became aware of outside of the study, was that course teams were not always put together in the ways implied in the participants’ accounts. A wider sample would most likely have revealed those particularities. Nevertheless, the approach in this study was fundamentally individually oriented. Extending the data collection through more interviews and observations, and a bigger sampling would have given a deeper understanding of the setting and its implications for identity development. However, recruiting a larger sample would make pursuing older academics extremely difficult. This is due to limitations to the amount I felt I could impose on their time and the scope of what I feel I could ask them about. Nevertheless, a bigger sample across all faculties of the university could shed a different light on potential tensions in the course production creation processes, but also the learning that could take place as a result of participants’ potential inexperience and unfamiliarity with each other.

A secondary limitation of the data collection may be that further triangulation would have been possible with the addition of different types of data. For example, group interviews of
the colleagues of the academics would have added to the possibility of triangulation. This might have been worthwhile to reduce further the bias in participants' telling the stories of their own experiences. To some extent, triangulation was achieved through discussing my interpretations of the findings with my supervisors, inter-rater reliability with another PhD student and confirming with the participants post observations. For instance, on reflection, the examples of academic practice when considering unimagination and unalignment were the hardest identification modes to capture data about. Perhaps additional types of data such as network analysis of publications of co-authors as a way to quantitatively assess the impact of collaboration on the researcher identity.

As a final note, it is worth addressing the issue of data obsolescence. Data for this study were collected in 2017 and 2018, nearly five years from the completion of this dissertation. A question may be raised as to the relevance of this data to the current state of older academic practice. Although this criticism might have some merit, the premise of qualitative research is based upon a constructivist ontology that does not suppose the discovery of a fixed truth. In other words, the interviews represent fragments of construed realities; realities which are in flux, changing between times and interactional groups. Thus, a researcher may never know how and in what way the same data collection methods would compare unless constant data was gathered and interpreted on the go. To complete this study, the data collection had to end.

6.5 Further research

The study explored dynamic and evolving older academics' identity trajectories in a landscape of practice. The study concluded that both individual subjectivities and institutional structures play a role in how these are developed. However, further research could be conducted to explore the identity of older academics. Six ideas of further research are explored.

First, further research in other HEI contexts could explore the trajectories of the participants in relation to different EDI characteristics such as ethnicity, disability, modes of employment or age (specifically) post-retirement age (age characteristics is mentioned in point 5 in this
When considering the age of the participants, this study focused on academics aged 50 and over, I did not collect data on the exact age of the participants. Focusing on academics specifically beyond retirement age would be fruitful in comparing the contexts. That would provide insights into possibly different aspects of academics prior the retirement age and post retirement age. Similarly, focusing on academics in part time employment, just having retired or having left academia to other sectors as a kind of exit interview/retrospective life history approach to help understand the ‘reject and exit’ scenario implied in the evidence earlier. One limitation of this study is not knowing if the participants are making the right choices with the way that they use affordances to enact their agentic choices. Academics who have retired may have a completely different perspective when the pressures of navigating the career ladder are gone. Exploring the same topics from the perspective of academics who have retired would be valuable to shed the light of that age range but also to compare it to the academics in this study.

When considering the ethnicity of the participants, further study could explore how this affected their identity trajectories. For instance, several recent studies highlighted how BAME academic staff are underrepresented in the senior academic roles (Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2023). Ijoyemi (2021) further suggests that less than 1% of the professors employed at UK universities are Black and few British universities employ more than two Black professors (Ijoyemi, 2021). Further studies could explore affordances available to those academics as well as the personal and cultural factors shaping their trajectories.

Second, although this study applied ethnographic methodology, further exploration of the identities of older academics might benefit from the collection of data from a wider range of participants to deepen more insights into this process. Such research would test replicability of the methods and findings. This could also involve participants at different institution, where affordances could be different. The perception of students, support staff, and supervisors for example could be then compared and contrasted with the view of the academics. This wider scope could contribute to consolidating a varied perspective in understanding the dynamics and tension in identity trajectories. Furthermore, an extensive period of observations over the years could explore other workplace affordances that could have been noticed through an academic year cycle. Above all, this exploratory and contextual interpretive study could be followed up with a quantitative study with a larger sample of
several institutions and participants (Bryman, 2012). For example, surveying could focus on confirming and or expanding six distinctive trajectories.

Third, this study could be utilised in exploring ways of capturing identity, both for research purposes as well as professional development techniques. For instance, action research. In this study, there was limited data whereby academics talked about having a formal mentor-mentee relationship at this stage of their career, as opposed to having one in their mid-career stage. There may be senior leaders who go about their kind of role more informally, as was indicated by one academic in this study. Certainly, emergent leaders reported benefits from such support, such as opportunities for talking about identities. This type of relationship affordance could be built into performance management as an HEI system. The type of explorative study in this these created opportunities for participants to explore their identities and externalise their thoughts through talking to me. Thus, this study gave academics a space to talk about their own practices and identities, enabling them to reflect on their own practice. In addition, observing the practice, allowed me to note and cross-reference discussions with the academics. Equally, the interpretation of what they meant was a powerful exploration. Such observations and interviews could be tools used in the workplace, possibly within mentoring (or coaching) relationships and spaces. Coaching might be part, as well as peer coaching, of older academics given their experiences to date.

Fourth, research has shown that academics tend to have different retirement trajectories than other occupational groups (Dorfman, 2000, 2009). The literature suggests that academic career development takes many years, but also, they seem to have a lifelong commitment to work and foremost seem to enter full-time positions later than many other professional groups (Sugar, Pruitt, Anstee, & Harris, 2005). Furthermore, as discussed in the findings, but also as literature reminds us, academic environments tend to value age and experience (Danson & Gilmore, 2009). In this study there was not enough substantial data on ageing or getting older, instead, it was focused on their late and senior career. The participants did not talk about factors associated with later life such as frailty, stamina, increasingly likelihood of long-term health conditions and disability. Thus, a possible research avenue next would be to explore in what way the physical changes associated with ageing has any implications on older academics' identity trajectories. Furthermore, participants mentioned retirement as a time they will engage in practices (such as research), they have no time for presently. Thus,
further studies could focus on post-retirement age academic transitions. For example, will they go part-time, or will they fully retire? What will they exit altogether, if at all possible, from academic work be like? Or are academics always remaining working professionals and what does this look like?

Fifth, although, there was limited data on gender as this was not the focus of the study. Two initial observations were made.

A) Gender was occasionally mentioned in passing in the sense that women tended to have more difficulty pursuing senior leadership roles. These concerns were voiced by both male and female participants, but they were not reported in the evidence in this study. Further research could explore gender differences, thus reasons why female academics seemed to have more challenges in pursuing leadership and senior roles. For example, could family, caring commitments or gender stereotypes be a factor in why fewer females transition into senior roles than males?

B) The data was not clear cut when it comes to female academics being less ambitious (in contrast to other studies such as Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2014). The data instead showed that some academics of both genders discussed their lack of ambition, whilst others had grand plans for the future. The study thus found no real difference between the attitude of women and men when it comes to imagining future roles. Further study could explore the correlation between ambition and older academics with a focus on gender differences.

Finally, sixth, with the rapid development of open digital networked technologies, older academics continue developing identities in these spaces. Literature is inconclusive on, academics in HE adapting to these changes (Iwaniec-Thompson, 2021). The findings of this study were not focused on identity trajectories in terms of developing digital literacies. However, given the context of the MET, the participants of this study are likely to have been working with new technologies for two decades at least. There were some inferences about technology in relation to conducting research, that involved navigating a complex and professional network across the landscape of their practice. Thus, the benefits of utilizing social networking when carrying out research were recognised. These findings aligned with other studies which have concluded that social media sites provided a convenient environment for scholarly communication and research dissemination (Bennett, 2017; Kara,
Furthermore, the findings reported that academics used ResearchGate and Academia.edu for keeping themselves up to date in their field, to promote their work online, and maintain their professional image. Further studies could explore the benefits of social media use for older academics. Still, some barriers were hindering the adoption of social media (SM). The sporadic findings of this study aligned with Bennett's study (2017) whereby some academics discussed initial uncertainties related to the use of SM. These uncertainties were alleviated with time spent getting used to using technology in their research and teaching practice. Further studies could investigate the extent to which technology creates the feeling of uncertainty in the practice of older academics. The challenge of encouraging academics in higher education to adopt technology, such as SM to support their teaching, research and management roles was frequently noted within the academic development community (Brown, 2013), especially among older academics (Gelade, 2013). For example, studies consider identity development uncertainties in adopting SM in teaching and research practice (Brown, 2013; Bennett, 2017; Kara, et.al., 2020). Indeed, Moran et al. (2011) and (Greenhow et.al (2019) found that age plays an important role in the decision to adopt SM for teaching: according to both results, younger academics use SM more than their older colleagues. Bennett's (2017) study focused on the identity work of academics as they moved into these new online learning spaces for teaching and learning. He concluded that academics experienced feelings of liminality: being unsettled and uncertain. The author further suggested that academics manage increased exposure through SM, open-access publishing and public engagement and negotiate the risk of failure associated with trying something new, thus redeveloping their academic identities. Above all, Bennett's (2017) paper concluded that it was a commitment to being a 'good teacher' that helped these academics to overcome these feelings. Further studies could focus on the use of technologies.

6.6 Final conclusion

In conclusion, it is my hope that the results of this exploratory ethnographic study have contributed to a deeper understanding of older academic's practice (teaching, research and institutional leadership) and their identity trajectories (Trajectory 1: Researcher and
Institutional Leader, Trajectory 2: Institutional Leader and Imagined Researcher, Trajectory 3: Institutional Leader, Trajectory 4: Researcher and Teacher, Trajectory 5: Teacher, Trajectory 6: Teacher and Leader) and that this understanding will enable institutions to better support and promote the continuous professional development of this growing group of workers in this complex profession. This research drew attention to the exploration of five affordances (academic freedom, recognition, collaboration, time and values and motivations) that can either enable or hinder the development of older academics' practices. At the same time, it highlighted the umbilical cord between these affordances and how older academics respond to them (adapt, reject and change), as captured in the development of their identities.

As I was conducting this PhD research, I noticed that on a personal level, I started paying greater attention to the complexity of academic practice and the possible identity trajectories for an academic. Hence, this study not only provided me with the experience of undertaking qualitative research in an academic context, which started my own academic trajectory, but also highlighted a myriad of different trajectories I can potentially follow, and or pave the way for a new trajectory altogether. It is also my hope that this study can influence academics, managers, and policy makers in terms of changing support for career development of academics.
7 References


Matters.


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at: https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1208154.


Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802211828.


Appendix 8-1. Information sheet to Deans of faculty

My name is Gosia Iwaniec-Thompson and I’m currently beginning a research project for my PhD based at the Centre for Education and Educational Technology (CREET), Open University.

Subject to approval by The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee’, I am intending to conduct an ethnographic research study to look at workplace learning of academics aged 55 and over.

Project aims

The research intends to explore two aspects of academics learning at the Open University which shape academics’ participation at work and mediate their learning.

First, an individual learning biography of academics and impact of these on participation in workplace activities (values, knowledge, vocational practice, procedures, conceptions, preferences). Second, how academics participate and learn in workplaces as determined by the affordance or invitational qualities of the university and ways in which individuals elect to engage with and participate in these (access and engagement, activities, norms, tools, values, procedures).

In specific my research questions ask:

4. How do older academics maintain their teaching and research practice?

5. How does the learning biography of older academics’ impact on their learning experiences in a workplace?
6. What are the affordances and practices available to older academics in their workplaces to support their learning?

Participants
Academics (55 years old and above) at the Open University who are involved in teaching and/or research (and management/leadership).

Data collection: The research takes on ethnographic approach, as it aims to interpret a shared pattern of learning off 10-15 academics. The data collection involves using non-participant observations (daily shadowing, attending meetings with the participant), unstructured interviews and journals (written or audio brief summary of learning opportunities, activities, encounters, affordances). The fieldwork is intended to commence between September 2018 and August 2019, and it will be divided into three parts (autumn, winter, spring).

During each part of the fieldwork every participant will be shadowed/observed for 3-4 days at their workplace. At the end of each observation period, the participant will be asked to attend an interview with the researcher. This process will be repeated three times (autumn, winter, spring) during the duration of fieldwork.

Confidentiality/ Anonymity
All collected data will be kept strictly confidential and the results will be reported in a research paper, conference proceedings, available to all participants on completion. During the data collection all participants will be given a consent form that will clearly outline their commitments, rights to withdraw, benefits and risks, confidentiality and anonymity.

When participants’ role with this project is complete, their data will be anonymised. From that time, there will be no record that links the data collected from them with any personal data from which participants could be identified (e.g., their name, position, emails, etc.). Up until the point at which the data have been anonymised, the participants can decide not to consent to having their data included in further analyses.

Your input
I’m writing to ask your permission to be allowed access to your mailing list/ a meeting
where I could meet academic staff who are 55 years old and above within your faculty/department. This should not take a large amount of time and can be conducted at a convenient time and date to be arranged, so I could meet potential participants to ask them if they want to take part in my study.

Thank you and I look forward to your reply,

Yours Sincerely,

Gosia Iwaniec-Thompson   FHEA
PhD in Education
Faculty of Welbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)
Centre for Education and Educational Technology (CREET)
gosia.iwaniec-thompson@open.ac.uk
Participant Information Sheet

Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please feel free to ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Introduction & Research Project Title
My name is Gosia Iwaniec-Thompson and I’m currently beginning a research project for my PhD based at the Centre for Education and Educational Technology (CREET), Open University. The title of my project is: 50 and over academics’ learning: co-participation in social practice and learning biography

What is the aim of this research?
The research intends to explore two aspects of academics’ learning (aged 50 and over) at The Open University which shape their’ participation at work and mediate their learning.

First, we will look at academics working life and career trajectories (Individual history of their work, drivers for changing jobs, skills and knowledge developed in those jobs).

Second we will look at requirements in performing and participating in their current workplace (activities they engage at work, challenges they encounter at work, ways of working with others at their work).

Thirdly, we will look at factors influencing how academics participate and learn in workplaces as determined by the organisational opportunities, organisational routines/social structures/ and cultural practices at the Open University.

Who can participate in this study?
You are invited to participate in this study if you are aged 50 and over, working at The Open University, you hold an academic contract and you are involved in teaching and/or research and management/leadership. Please note as this study only looks at academics over 50 we can only accept participants who are 50 and over. During the first interview you will be asked about your age.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you will need to indicate your agreement by reading and signing the ‘Consent form by returning it to Gosia.iwaniec-thompson@open.ac.uk.

What does participation in this study involve?
You are invited to participate in first stage of the study that will take place from October to December 2018. In Stage One (October – December 2018) there are three interviews. Between each interview the participant and the researcher will agree on observations.
between the interviews. The purpose of the observations is to look at your everyday work activities to understand your work.

By signing the consent form you are agreeing to participate in the first stage of the study. You can withdraw from the first stage of the study until the point where the data are transcribed and stripped of all your personal identifiers. Please note that based on the first stage of the data collection a second and third stage of data collection will be designed (being conducted between September – December 2019). For these stages a new ‘Consent form’ and ‘Participant information sheet’ including the nature of questions, observations, information related to your privacy, data storage and right to withdraw will be communicated to you in due course. You will be invited to participate and sign a new consent form.

What will we be talking about?
During the interviews. The first interview aims to gather information about your working life, your career trajectory; The second interview looks at your current employment and its requirements for performing and participating in your working practice by looking at your activities and interactions; The third interviews looks at participation and engagement at work to identify factors that determine participation in the workplace and what motivates your engagement with the workplace.
During the interviews we will discuss the types and lengths of observations (max 2 days). The purpose of the observations is to look at your daily activities, shadow you during your meetings, observe your work in the office etc.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort. The three interviews are semi-structured and none of the questions refer to any upsetting or uncomfortable subjects. When it comes to observations, we will discuss and agree on what sort of observations you will feel comfortable with (observations of your meetings, your work in the office, shadowing, etc.). However if during the interviews and/or observations any issues will be observed, the researcher will be able to point you in the direction of appropriate support if needed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
It is hoped that this work will add to the scarce empirical research on academics aged 50 and over regarding their learning at their workplace.
You will be offered £15 Amazon voucher for taking part in the first stage of the study. If you decide to participate in the second and third stage of the study you will be reimbursed 15£ for each stage.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?
Interviews will be recorded using a voice recording device and during observations I will be taking notes on my laptop and or pen and paper using an observation template. The audio recording data will be transcribed as soon as possible after each interview and the audio recording data once transcribed will be immediately destroyed.
Transcripts and observation notes will be kept strictly confidential and immediately all data
will be anonymised by stripping data of personal identifiers and details about your employment. The data gathered in this interview will be returned to you for verification after it has been transcribed and stripped of identifiers.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential? All the identifiable data collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You and your setting will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Please note confidentiality apply to identity and identifiable data, not to all data. Anonymised data will be used in writing up my PhD thesis as well as any further publications, conference presentations and proceedings.

What will happen to the results of the research project? Results of the research may be published in journals, conference preceding and reports. You will not be identified in any report or publication as the data will be anonymised and stripped of all identifiers. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please ask the researcher directly.

What if I have other questions? If you have any other questions please contact the principle researcher: Gosia Iwaniec-Thompson (details are below). Alternatively, if you have any concerns about the project you can also contact the principal supervisor (Dr Chris Kubiak) or any other member of the research team.

Thank you for taking part in this research

Contacts for further information
....
Appendix 8-3. Ethical approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project title: 55 and over academics’ learning: co-participation in social practice and learning biography</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date application submitted: 16/08/2018</td>
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</table>

This message confirms that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion on behalf of The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

As part of your favourable opinion, it is essential that you are aware of and comply with the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, information in your original application, in order to ensure your continued safety and the good conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that you contact the HREC with any proposed amendments to your research, for example - a change in location or participants. HREC agreement needs to be in place before any changes are implemented, except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is or may be affected.

3. Your HREC reference number has to be included in any publicity or correspondence related to your research, e.g. when seeking participants or advertising your research, so it is clear that it has been agreed by the HREC and adheres to OU ethics review processes.

4. Researchers should have discussed any project-related risks with their Line Manager and/or Supervisor, to ensure that all the relevant checks have been made and permissions are in place, prior to a project commencing, for example compliance with IT security and Data protection regulations.

5. Researchers need to have read and adhere to relevant OU policies and guidance, in particular the Ethics Principles for Research involving Human Participants and the Code of Practice for Research - [http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/](http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/)

6. The Open University's research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of research council, professional organisations and grant awarding bodies research ethics guidelines. Where required, this message is evidence of OU HREC support and can be included in an external research ethics review application. The HREC should be sent a copy of any external applications, and their outcome, so we have a full ethics review record.
7. At the end of your project you are required to assess your research for ethics related issues and/or any major changes. Where these have occurred you will need to provide the Committee with a HREC final report to reflect how these were dealt with using the template on the research ethics website - http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/full-review-process (HREC Final Report form)

Sent on behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee

Professor Louise Westmarland  Dr Duncan Banks  Dr Claire Hewson
Chair  Deputy Chair  Deputy Chair

Human Research Ethics Committee
The Open University
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics
Appendix 8-4. Initial interview schedule

Initial interview: Participants’ working life and career trajectories

1.1 Tell me about your working life to date since leaving school

   (Probes for example: reasons for changing job at various stages of his or her working life? What motivated/motivates you to take these jobs?)

1.2 Could you describe those jobs to me?

   (Probes: What were you doing? What skills did you have to have for those jobs?)

1.3 What were the main points of transitions in your working life?

   (Probes: What happened? What was significant about that? How did this change you?)

1.4 Could you explain briefly how you came to be doing your current work?

   (Probes: What has prepared you for this role? What is your area of expertise?)

1.5 Imagine that a friend would like to apply for your job and wants to emphasise that she/he is the right person for that job. Can you describe to me what she/he would need (personal qualities, skills, knowledge, previous experience)?

   (Probes: What surprised you most about the range of activities in this job? How do you develop these capabilities? What do you find satisfying or rewarding about this job?)

1.6 Where do you see yourself in the future?

   (Probes: What role would you like to have in the future? What would get you there?)

1.7 What is ahead of you in the next few days/ weeks / months?

   (Probes: Good things? / Challenges? Skills/Resources needed to deal with those challenges?)
1.8 Could I talk with you about the sorts of activities I could observe in the next few weeks?

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 8-5. The follow up interview schedule

The follow up interview: Describing the requirements for performing and participating in their workplace

2.1 Can you tell me about your last week/month at work?
   (Probes: Has anything good or challenging happened? Refer back to answer from 1st interview regarding plans for the upcoming week. Reflection on the observed activity)

2.2 Can you describe to me your typical day at work?
   (Probes: Activities that you engage in less frequently than monthly? Any activities that you may be called to engage in but which occur only in exceptional circumstances? How similar is the work that you do, compared to other academics in the workplace?)

2.3 Can you tell me about some of the challenges you encounter in your work?
   (Probes: What are the skills that enable you to manage these parts of your work? How well prepared do you feel for the tasks you are required to take on?)

2.4 Tell me about your physical working environment?
   (Probes: Where do you mostly work? How does that shape what you do? What tools or equipment do you use for the job?)

2.5 Who do you work with in order to do your job done effectively?
   (Probes: What brings you together with other people? What inhibits these sorts of interactions? Networks?)

2.6 How is work assigned to people at your workplace?
   (Probes: How does the employment status shape it? (FT / PT, home-workers, in office workers;
personal standing, reputation, individual characteristics, affiliations, etc.)

2.7 Can you tell me a little bit about the values and norms of your workplace and/or organisation?
   (Probes: How important are these for you?)

2.8 What is ahead of you in the next few days/weeks/months?
   (Probes: Good things? / Challenges?)

2.9 Could I talk with you about the sorts of activities I could observe in the next few days?

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Concluding interview: Factors that influence participation and engagement at work

3.1 Can you tell me about your last week/months at work?
   (Probes: Has anything good or challenging happened? Refer back to answer from 1st and 2nd interview regarding plans for the upcoming week. Reflection on the observed activity)

3.2 What aspects of your work do you find most interesting/satisfying? Why is that?

3.3 How has your role changed over the time you have been in the post?
   (Probes: Have you/your values and attitudes changed since you have been in the role? What did you have to do to deal effectively with these changes?)

3.4 In what ways are you able to make decisions about what you do in your work? Can you give me an example?
   (Probes: What kind of tasks do you have the freedom to make decisions about? Why is that? What areas of your work are constrained by others, and you are less able to make decisions about? Why is that?)

3.5 Do you feel your workplace provides support and guidance to you and your colleagues in your work?
   (Probes: Who would you go to talk to about problems and challenges? Who would you go to talk to in case of upset or worry?)

3.6 Are there any learning opportunities available you have decided not to engage with?

3.7 How involved do you feel in what happens in your workplace?
(Probes: What would need to happen to make you more involved in the workplace?)

3.8 What would you say to your younger self about your career choice and your current workplace choice?

3.9 What is ahead of you in the next few months? / Looking at the personal calendar
   (Probes: Good things? / Challenges? Development opportunities / Why certain meetings are greyed out? Double booked? On what basis will you decide which one to engage with/ attend and which ones don’t? )

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 8-7. Observation template

Gosia Iwaniec-Thompson, PhD Candidate, WELS

55 and over academics’ learning: co-participation in social practice and learning biography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ name:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Work activities
   - range of activities,
   - When things happen, length of time
   - Purpose of encounter/ activity

2. Communication
   - Formal/ Informal interactions
   - Reasons for communication
   Verbal, nonverbal communication

3. Environment and tools
   - physical/ online settings
   - work space, tools allowing particular work activities

4. Participant’s interpretation
   - goals and intentions,

5. Who was involved

6. Thoughts and interpretations

After observations debrief:
   - How do you feel about your day today?
   - Was this a typical day? What was typical/ what was different?
   - What was frustrating and what did you learn today?

Follow up with 2 or 3 interview
Appendix 8-8. Consent Form

**Informed Consent**
Gosia-Iwaniec Thompson, PhD Researcher, Faculty of WELS
55 and over academics’ learning: co-participation in social practice and learning biography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Taking part in the study</th>
<th>Please tick</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the study information dated [DD/MM/YYYY], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consent voluntarily to be a participant in the first stage of this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and or stop observations and I can withdraw from the study at any time up until the data is transcribed and stripped of all personal identifiers (December 2018) when the data will be anonymised, without having to give a reason.</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that taking part in the study involves participating in three of observations</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree for the interviews to be audio recorded and immediately after and anonymised.</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that during interviews an agreement will be reached on</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree for the researcher to take notes during the observations and observations all data will be anonymised.</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that I will be offered £15 Amazon voucher for the participation in the first stage of this Study</td>
<td>YES [ ] NO [ ]</td>
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2. Use of the information in the study

<table>
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<tr>
<td>I understand that anonymised information I provide will be used for PhD thesis and they may be published in journals, conference preceding and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that personal information collected about me that can</td>
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identify me, such as my name, where I live, my previous employment details will not be shared beyond the study team.

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<th>YES</th>
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I understand that my data will be stripped from personal identifiers during the transcription and after the observations and stored in a password protected drive until August 2021.

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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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After the data has been stripped of all personal identifiers and it has been anonymised I agree that the information I provided during the interviews can be quoted in research outputs.

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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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### 3. Future use and reuse of the information by others

I give permission for the interview transcripts and observation notes that has been stripped of personal identifiers and anonymised to be deposited in a specialist data centre at the OU archives, so it can be used for future research and learning.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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### 4. Signatures

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I wish to receive debriefing/ and or follow up information regarding this study

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

For participants unable to sign their name, mark the box instead of signing

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form with the potential participant and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This research project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee - HREC reference number: HREC/2986/Iwaniec

http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/
### Appendix 8-9. Initial list of themes and sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Files</th>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on own practice to improve</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Reflective writing; Thinking things through;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking back seat to listening others to understand their work, their points</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team work, collaboration, international</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>International collaboration; Collaborative process in agreeing on tasks; Team work; Finding common ground; Information exchange, Observing and adapting practice; Working alongside more experienced colleagues; Searching advice from other practitioners Inviting others in the discussion Balance between seeing colleagues and maintaining distance from them; Tearing apart all parts of the project to get the best results; Peer review; Copy a model in their practice; Benefit and challenge of cross discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting previous knowledge and experience in new circumstance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Utilizing core initial training;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from reviewing, giving and receiving feedback</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Having a mentor; Mentors comment on aspect of their practice;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration and practice, Skills perfected over time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards CPDs, training, workshops, events.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>some sessions not worth doing, resentment to sessions which are mandatory willingness to do other sessions but no time trainings session are not good enough so participants sit down with an expert Some session were useful e.g. one on viva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updating knowledge, keeping abreast</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>macro view;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning through doing, figuring things out,</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Learning by doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU practices and affordances</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrown into a deep water</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Feel unsupported when trying to navigate OU systems and processes No much of induction; Learning by osmosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sharing and consistency in teaching practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>across faculty and wider OU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility of work, Degree of job autonomy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Physical work flexibility; Being able to combine boring and interesting parts of the job, Ability to decide who they work with Room for negotiation, Equitable teaching, task division Slower pace and manageable, less complicated and more settled - Alison, Omar family commitments mean they can't go to campus as often. they take Monday off even though managers were not happy with it. Measuring outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation to work outside of working hours</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>In contrast, some academics like to work a weekends and outside of typical working hours; The institution would cease to exist if it wasn't for working over normal hours, at the same time a participant admits not to work 'enough' hours atm due to family commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU systems shortcomings, bureaucracy, barriers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>IT issues; Systems don't allow innovation Ways of going around the IT barriers It systems shortcomings meant that materials were not delivered on time for students; Challenges when trying to innovate It slows down work, In contrast OU should stay in line with their ethos and don't try to be like BBC with their flashy website etc., OU should take more credit for what they do, e.g. Blue Planet Compulsory courses ill designed Challenges in establishing new courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unproductive abundance of meetings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vague meetings, attendees unprepared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy workload affects taking on new tasks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>it affects taking on new tasks, it affects quality of tasks manageable workload in comparison to other institutions; need for prioritization;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instances of bullying and unfairness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>bullying; sabotaging promotion; work jealousy; work unfairness reg promotion; gender bias promotion; Resign from work based on gender unfairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues’ relationship tensions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of understanding; Adhocracy in collaboration; Academics and non-academic staff relations; Academics not replaced when they leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down management decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Little consultation when assigning teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload management strategies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Workload management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and guidance when needed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit of writing and developing teaching material</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>satisfaction of putting courses together; OU teaching reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive resistant culture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Conflict reverse culture; Things gets grinded to the sand; People get around problems then work on them; Inward looking culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds for international travel, conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variability of input, commitment, underperforming</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Chaos at meetings;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disperse institution creates challenges</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Feeling disjointed Being able to 'hide' and be lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progression based on experience and recognition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Also lack of progression due to lack of jobs at high level; Recognition followed by a job offer Role blocked off as lack of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentic choices and drives</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Understand academics and how they orient their work and career choices. Their learning choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serendipity in career, education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Luck and chance in new jobs, tasks, roles,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose to work F2F to see colleagues</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of social justice and empowering people</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job crafting, Task crafting, task negotiation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>ways in getting tasks they want, selective way in choosing what they engage with feeling obligation in tasks to engage with Task based on capabilities, Need for multitasking and ability to concentrate on various parts at specific time Tasks assigned, expected to be done based on what they are good at, research based/teaching based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest or lack in managerial, leadership roles</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Taking on leadership responsibility from early age; Ownership and accountability; Responsibility to run things, decide on longevity and existence of projects; High level authorizing; Delegating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility and innovation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Try to push boundaries in institutional transparency; He values innovation in employer - Alan, Solving and improving OU Want to do different things then usual - Alan Doer in the tasks they engage - Alison Strategies to engage people Questioning things - Emma Employer involved kids in interview selection and the participant liked that. Move things alone -Fred Innovative strategies to engage and alleviate others to engage instead of relying on the same people - Eva</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in what is happening</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Involvement varies depending on who is in charge;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking, brokering and developing relationships</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Agency, Practices that support learning Being selective in groups to engage with Brokering OU reputation building Knowing people across the university Linking people with others Online networks Community building Developing networks, Informal chats, Networks help in getting, looking for a job Networks allow create new projects Searching for possible collaborators in the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of education and working with students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>empathy with students, students at OU are rare commodity Value of providing education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting expectations, Fair judgement, Integrity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Communicating well; Supportive to others;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being valued as an expert Recognition Credibility</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>having a bit more impact in what they say then other less senior academics; being invited to events due to their expertise, skills, knowledge; building recognized position in their field; Receiving awards for their expertise and outputs; Work is assigned based on reputation; Work persistence and determination Satisfaction when completing tasks Feel good at what they do; Know what they are good at Participation in wider debates Head hunted, Role created for them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude and affordances towards research</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Love for writing; Application of research in practice; Engaging with various subjects; Negotiating time for research; Learn from research; Make a difference in their discipline; Pursue core interests; Lack of awareness of colleagues research; Expectations to do research and produce publications; Lack of interest or time to engage with research; Learning from undertaking research; Spending time outside of 'working hours' to read for research; Challenges to maintain research; Expectations to bid.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity drive, searching new challenges</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Frustration with previous job; Looking for something new; Curiosity drive; Engage with things as they are interesting;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of job security</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Retirement, Age</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People gang up against common enemy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion initiatives against the VC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not wanting to engage with the issues but being drowned anyway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time of uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>