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"You take your past with you wherever you go"

The experiences and results of mature adult student graduates engagement with third level education at Trinity College Dublin

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Michele Giblin

Supervisor: Dr. Andrew Loxley

School of Education

Trinity College Dublin

August 2015

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For my mother and father, Sheelagh and Terry, whom I miss dearly,

and my wonderful, patient and supportive husband and family, Frank,

Jessica, Julianne and Stephen.

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Summary

The concept of lifelong learning has evolved over a number of decades and has been channelled through various supranational and national organisations, for instance UNESCO[1] (1960), OECD[2] (1973), EU[3](1996), HEA[4] (2010) and expressed in many policy documents, papers recommendations and research studies (Delors report, UNESCO, 1996; OECD 96/102, report; Lisbon strategy, 2000; Irish Modernisation agenda, 2011; National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Hunt report, 2011; Fleming, Loxley, Kenny & Finnegan 2009).

This thesis explores the experiences of mature adults who enrolled in a degree programme at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) sometime between 1995 and 2005 and subsequently graduated. The definition used to describe a mature student was that designated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as being 23 years of age or over, on the year of enrolment in the degree programme. This study set out to examine why these mature adults chose to deviate from a particular life-trajectory and why they chose to engage in full time third level education as a means to doing so. I also sought to explore the fit between policy orientations that facilitate mature engagement in education and the aims, experiences and outcomes of that education for those mature individuals. To this end, I devised the following research questions:

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[1] UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

[2] OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

[2] OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

[3] EU: European Union.

[3] EU: European Union.

[4] HEA: Higher Education Authority.

[4] HEA: Higher Education Authority.

[5]Trinity College Dublin is often referred to as an elite college, based on its long history established in

1) What are the triggers or events that cause people to decide to go to college as mature students?
2) What are their assumptions?
3) How did they relate to academic staff and traditional students within the college?
4) What (if any) support systems did they value within the home and within the college?
5) How did the process of going to college and emerging as a degree holder affect employment, personal outcome and social opportunities?
6) Has a third level education changed their ways of thinking, their behaviours or their routine habits?

A qualitative, retrospective approach was adopted that employs a life history approach to explore and make sense of the meanings and experiences that these mature individuals had with respect to their relationship with education. The research was centred in one institution (Trinity College Dublin) to reduce any extraneous variables (for example variations in degree content, differences in regulations, status of institution) that may have impacted on this relationship. As the dominant narrative of policy documents and recommendations appears to link the need to increase graduate numbers with provision for the labour market, the development of this research was guided by a conceptual framework of social mobility.

The thesis comprises of ten chapters. In the first chapter by way of good practise and in the context of disclosure, a reflexive biographical piece is offered to clarify my own position in undertaking this research, followed by an outline of the structure of the remaining chapters in the thesis. Chapter two explores and critically analyses the historical development of lifelong learning policy nationally and internationally and offers an overview of research into the experiences of mature adults in Higher Education. Reflecting on the relationship between education and employment, social mobility has been introduced as the guiding framework in the development of this study and of the research questions. In chapter three I discuss the theoretical approaches that have played an influential part in forming the lenses through which I view and analyse the mature experiences with education. Social mobility has been identified as the leading conceptual theory which in response to the education-employment paradigm has guided the development of the conceptual framework for this study. However, as this study adopts a life history approach, there are other intellectual traditions within sociology and psychology and within other disciplines that would do justice to exploring and critically analysing the concepts addressed in this thesis. At the outset, chapter three acknowledges the influence of these traditions, by discussing developmental theory, and group socialisation processes in terms of both the individual and the group and also the social and cultural contexts in which the individual develops. Having acknowledged these influences, this chapter elaborates on the use of Hopper's (1981) conception of social mobility and its relevance to this study. Chapter four details the methodology in terms of the research design, sampling, strategies of analysis of data and procedure of the study. The findings are divided into four (five-eight) chapters based on key stages within the individuals life: Early years,

Bridging years, College years, Post College years. Chapter nine presents the findings through the prism of the research questions. The final chapter (ten) offers an overview of the chapters and based on the evidence accrued in this study, casts a critical lens on Hopper's conceptualisation of social mobility. The chapter draws the thesis to a close with reflections on the research and the contribution it makes to policy development and the wider ongoing intellectual project.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the concept of social mobility in terms of hierarchical movement through social rankings is flawed, (in both financial and reputational senses) and that the value of education to mature individuals is better appreciated in terms of their intellectual growth and opportunities for social fluidity. The evidence points to the pervasive influence of having someone, particularly within your formative years, even if in a dysfunctional setting, who had an appreciation of knowledge. This appears to have had a strong effect in orienting the mature individual towards engaging in education as adults.

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1 Chapter One-Introduction

1.1 Rationale

I was a mature student at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) in the early 2000s. I found it challenging, enjoyable, wonderful, miserable, frustrating, exhilarating, boring, illuminating, and frightening, confidence building and confidence draining. The year that I qualified (2008), the Recession had well and truly hit Ireland and the effects of it were felt quickly and pervasively. The year above mine had graduated in 2007, the majority of whom were not only able to gain employment relatively easily, but were able to exercise choice between possible jobs. In my year, graduating in 2008, only three people (out of a class of seventy) managed to gain employment. This was worrisome, particularly for those hoping to continue their education in this discipline (psychology) as many of the professional postgraduate courses in this area required work experience in addition to academic qualifications. For older adult students this represented an additional pressure, they did not have the same lifespan ahead as their younger cohorts and so unemployment represented a higher cost to them in terms of career planning than it did to a younger student. They had "sunk costs" in terms of lack of earning power through years in college, and for many through family sacrifice. When we got together socially for the odd night out, I began to notice that our grumbling sessions were not fixated on our lack of jobs, or our lack of money following our education, but many times we reverted to talking about the subject matter of our degrees, bemoaning the lack of opportunity to engage in discourse surrounding the

academic subjects that had been such an important part of our lives for at least the last four years. This was a "eureka" discovery for me, in a sense a pivoting moment and what I would term the true beginning of my education. I was shifting from a somewhat functional understanding of education towards a curiosity and appreciation of the holistic nature of education. I wanted to gain a fuller understanding of this holism. This thesis, then, was born from the need to answer a simple question: "Why do adults engage in education to effect change in their lives?"

Hopper's (1981) concept of social mobility was used in framing the development of the research. However the intention in undertaking the study was not to test a theory of social mobility, but to understand the reasons why an individual chooses to re-enter education and to explore the relationship that they had with education throughout their lives. Mature students are generally referred to as non- traditional students (Fleming, Loxley, Kenny & Finnegan, 2010). Attending third level as a mature student involves deviating from an individual life-trajectory. The traditional student proceeding directly into third level from second level (once the exam results meet the criteria of the course selected), is the norm. In order to understand the needs, wants and expectations of the mature student, I needed them to view their education through a retrospective lens. I also wanted to reduce, where possible, the extraneous variables that impacted on their decision making processes regarding engaging in education so I situated the study in one university, in an effort to minimise the effects of institutional status and reputation. This was not a study to compare experiences within different institutions, but rather to focus on those who had opted and been accepted onto degree programmes in one institution, and thus, though engaged in

different courses, would share commonalities of space and place. Adopting a retrospective lens by using a life history approach (Merrill & West, 2009; Roberts, 2002) employing case studies, would illuminate their relationship with education throughout their lives. In this way I would gain an understanding of how they came to view education as a catalyst for some element of change to their lives. However, it is important to remember that the inclusion of mature students has been facilitated by changes in policies and admission procedures. There was a need therefore to interrogate State policies that have facilitated the inclusion of mature students in the third level population, in order to understand why these policies were created, what they hoped to achieve and the steps taken to bring those policies into fruition, paying attention to the changing nuances in lifelong education, the shifting foci amongst international and national organisations and the extent to which (if at all) this is reconciled with the needs and wants of the mature student. This thesis draws upon data gathered from case studies of mature student graduates (who would have attended Trinity College Dublin [TCD][5]) at some stage between 1995 and 2005) using a qualitative life history approach.

1.2 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 2 begins by offering a review of the historical development of lifelong learning from a supranational and national perspective. It plots the shifting agendas and the

[5]Trinity College Dublin is often referred to as an elite college, based on its long history established in 1592 by royal charter, and its frequent high placement in International ranking systems. It was ranked as the top university in Ireland in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2014.

growing dominance of labour market discourse in policy formation. The major critiques of this development are then offered. These include criticism of neo liberal dominance, charges of reductionism, massification and elitism within the education system. This chapter then explores the concept of equality as it pertains to third level attendance and views the structure and agency debate through a prism of State and individual ownership of education experiences. Following on, literature regarding the experiences of mature students in Higher Education and beyond is explored. In addition to labour market and gendered considerations, much of this literature concerns the extent of social mobility within this adult population. The chapter draws to a close by way of a précis of social mobility, where I highlight a gap in research, specifically anomalies in the conception of social mobility, namely that movement or lack of movement through social ranks often is an erroneous explanation of a mature individual's engagement and gain from a third level education.

Chapter 3 sets out the conceptual framework and theoretical paradigms that have been useful in guiding the development of this research and salient in the analysis of the data. This chapter opens with a discussion as to how education is culturally situated with respect to two different theoretical models of human development. These have been included in terms of framing the change in the provision of education from being a primarily front loaded process (where the concentration of education is in the first two decades of life) to being a lifelong process and the interaction between these and the development of the individual. The chapter then moves on to consider in detail the human need to affiliate in terms of socialisation and group membership. Here I discuss the challenges presented to our understanding of socialisation by the

mature adult re-entering education, in the sense of having a loop back[6] re-socialising experience and how this impacts and is evidenced in terms of group dynamics and behaviour. The paradigms used to frame this particular discussion are social change and social change belief systems (in terms of collective responses), social cohesion model (in terms of the affective appeal of group membership) and social identification models (in terms of cognitive or perceptual alternative to cohesion explanation). Evaluation of these models has identified a weakness in group theory in that they fail to account for non-deliberation in group membership. Hopper's (1981) concept of group membership (which distinguishes between group awareness and group consciousness) addresses this weakness and is a useful point from which to delve deeper into group characteristics and examine contact hypothesis where four key factors - equal status, common goals, institutional and social support, and intergroup cooperation - are regarded as necessary to facilitate successful movement between groups and reduce prejudice. These explanations of group behaviour and group dynamics have formed an important backdrop to understanding the behaviour and non/acceptance of mature adult students, who are deviating from their normative life-trajectory, by groups they belong to, or come to join, during their college experience. These paradigms offer rich explanation of group behaviour, and are explored in detail in chapter seven and lead to discussion of my own development of group theory engaging with the idea that group belonging can be, to an extent, the result of individual choice, based on the degree of freedom the individual has to exercise choice as much as, or more so, than group acceptance. This backdrop has been useful in

[6] "Loop back" refers to engaging in experiences that are normatively associated with an early stage in the life-cycle (Schuller in Fingerman, Berg, Smith, Antonucci, 2011:19).

guiding me towards a conceptual framework based on Hopper's theory of social mobility (1981) which has relevance to the social policies that facilitated mature participation in education as well as to the individual's journey through education. However, I will elaborate on the field of social mobility in exploring the contributions of theorists other than Hopper and I shall view the framework of social mobility through a critical lens as I suggest that the concept itself, although widespread, is limited in its current interpretation and evaluation. The theoretical viewpoints of Zajonc (1968, 2001) and Bandura (2006) have been particularly useful in seeking to understand from an individual's perspective how they formed a favourable attitude towards engaging in education, and what was the trigger that caused them to do so at that particular point in their lives. Hopper's (1981) theory is elucidated in the second half of this chapter.

Chapter 4 reviews the methodology by first restating briefly an outline of the conceptual framework having covered this area in detail in the previous chapter. The outline is offered by way of introduction to the research design. The decision making process regarding adopting a qualitative approach is detailed. The research design process is discussed in terms of steps taken in the decision making process, access and sampling, participants, procedures and analysis of data. This chapter also elucidates upon methodological and ethical issues in relation to the development of this study.

There are four analysis chapters; early years, bridging years, college years and post graduate years. Each chapter is organised as a type of time capsule encompassing a collection of experiences as recounted in the life history of the participants. Chapter 5,

the early years, provides insight into the structures that shaped and formed these mature adults, beginning with reflections on their childhood, their families and their upbringing and continuing to encompass their adult family life. This gives a sense of the variables that impacted on their development, their interactions with education, and the employment patterns they were exposed to in their family of origin and through their spouses/partners (if relevant) in their adult family life. This was important to start building an understanding of their exposure to and regard for education. As the concept of social mobility involves the notion of social strata, it was important at this juncture to establish a picture of the social background of these participants, so as to critically analyse what is meant by social strata and whether the experiences of this cohort is adequately captured by such definitions.

The aim of chapter 6, "the bridging years" is to attempt to capture the events that caused (from their perspective) these individuals to deviate from their personal life trajectories and to understand the influences that caused them to have a positive attitude towards doing so by way of returning to education rather than, for instance, changing job, moving house, or emigrating. The theorising of Bandura (2001, 2006) and of Zajonc (1968, 2001) has been particularly useful in explicating these factors. Analysis of the data at this stage, led to groupings of orientation that transcended age, gender and social background. These have been presented as typologies in order to best explain the nuances in orientation, and are useful to probe in terms of Hopper's concept of social mobility involving an act of will and intention, in addition to highlighting the complexity of motivation beyond that of wanting movement within the social strata.

Chapter 7 details engagement with education by first exploring the pathways this cohort took to gain entry into TCD. Following on it focuses on the experiences of this cohort in the college community of TCD. The theoretical underpinnings of group membership were useful at this juncture and together with the analysis led to my development of a community model which separates groups based on the type of relationship that exists between the individual and the group. The purpose of this model was to view group membership from the viewpoint of the individual and the degree of freedom the individual had in choosing his/ her level of inclusion in that group.

Chapter 8 presents the last set of analysis and explores the post graduation experiences of this cohort in terms of social, personal and economic returns. It reflects on the outcomes of this cohort's university education in terms of the "fit" with their initial aims that would have been introduced in chapter six. The structure of this chapter is such that it facilitates probing of the relationship between education and social mobility and the extent to which education has effected change in the individual beyond that stated in their original aims.

Chapter 9 offers discussion of the findings by using the lens of the research questions. This has been done, in order to answer the questions that prompted the development of this thesis, and in doing so to also highlight unanticipated discoveries that grew from the groundwork of the analysis rather than necessarily the research questions.

Chapter 10 draws this study to a close by providing an overview of the chapters and reflecting on the thesis. It reviews the merits and usefulness of the social mobility paradigm and outlines how this thesis makes a contribution to a re-evaluation of social mobility. It draws to a close by discussing the limitations of this study and the main contributions made by this work to the field of research.

2 Chapter Two- Policy and Influence

2.1 Introduction

Over the last five decades the structure and nature of education, has evolved from one which primarily focused on front loading[7] to one which encompasses voluntary, formal and informal education over a lifetime. Specificities of meaning beyond semantic have been attached to terms such as adult, recurrent, second chance, widening participation and lifelong education (Griffin, 2009). All have been subsumed under the umbrella term of lifelong learning. The concept of lifelong learning (LLL) is firmly established (if used interchangeably with the term lifelong education) in the lexicon at Global[8] and National levels[9] and used in commission reports and policy documents[10] emanating from institutional pillars in both those spheres.

The main focus of analysis in this research is the experiences of mature individuals, who have competed undergraduate degrees at Trinity College Dublin between the years 1995 - 2005. The definition of a mature student is designated by the HEA as being over the age of 23 in the year of entry. In common with many other countries (UK for example), the most usual manner of entering tertiary education is upon completion of examinations at second level, as a result most of the constituents of

[7] Front loading refers to the process whereby education happens in a sequential basis in the early stages of life, with third level education following directly from second level schooling.

[8] UNESCO (1960) International Conference on Adult Education, OECD(1973) Recurrent Education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning, ICAE (2003) Agenda for the Future- Six Years later.

[9] The Programme for National Recovery (1987-1991), National Development Plan (2007-2013)

[10] Communication from the Commission (2006) Adult Learning: It's never too late to learn. National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 {Hunt Report} 2011.

third level are young adults in their late teenage years (traditional students). Entry to third level institutions is usually predicated by exams (Leaving Certificate or recognised equivalent) which mark the end of second level schooling. School leavers wishing to apply for third level courses do so through the CAO, the Central Applications Office. Once the student receives the appropriate grade in his/her Leaving certificate exam, then it is likely s/he will be offered the desired course. This is, of course, a simplified explanation of the manner in which school leavers enter third level. There are mitigating circumstances which impact on third level attendance, for instance, geographic location, finance, quality of available schooling (often associated with home location and social class background), supporting services (for example, financial grants and maintenance) and the register of courses available in any one institution, (Walsh, McCoy, Seery, Conway, 2014; O'Connell, Clancy, & McCoy, 2005,2006).

However, in response to international and national concerns regarding ageing populations, technological developments and social justice (for example: European Year of Lifelong Learning, 1996) national policies (for example: National Plan of Access to Higher Education, 2008) have sought to change the student constituency, by offering within third level institutions, additional entry paths into third level education which have been subsumed into the educational routes and reflect different educational amounts[11]. These policies have attempted to facilitate people in joining at various stages in their life trajectories, changing the preconception of education from

[11] Amount refers to the extent and type of education that an individual has been exposed to rather than the level of credentialised education they achieved.

being confined to defined chronological stages of life to one of lifelong learning possibilities.

As a starting point, this chapter will offer a précis of the development, expansion and differentiation of Higher Education systems. Then an historical view of the growth in lifelong learning from supranational and national perspectives is offered. This will illuminate the evolving links between economic growth and lifelong learning and give some insight as to how a neoliberal agenda appears to have come to dominate lifelong learning provision. A critique of policy position follows, in addition to a review of research regarding mature engagement in education. Finally the concept of social mobility is introduced and the research questions guiding this study are restated.

2.2 Development, expansion and differentiation of Higher Education Systems.

The intention of this section is not to give a comprehensive account of the development of higher education systems or analysis of the challenges faced as conceptual frameworks changed over time. Rather it is the intention to provide a broad overview of the historical development of the higher education sector and to foreground commonalities of expansion and differentiation across decades.

The concept of education beyond that of second level is one embedded in history. Hazelkorn (2011) notes that the first degree-granting university in the world was the University of Bologna which was established in 1088. According to Kivinen & Poikus

(Highman, 2015), from medieval times rulers needed people with particular talents to aid in the administration of the kingdom, leading to the emergence of public service systems. Rulers established universities in order to providing training for such people and to facilitate this process. Neave (1982) references Kant in the 18th century as drawing attention to scholarship and the need for a model within the State structure that would allow the State a degree of control over the professions of law, medicine and theology as these were dominant influences on the manner in which society operated. Philosophy, by its nature, was concerned with the pursuit of scholarship and truth and thus was in effect a judge of the teachings of the other three faculties (law, medicine and theology) and in tandem with the understanding of man as free man, free to pursue truth, it would not be appropriate for this faculty to be under State regulation (Neave, 1980). Therefore the Kantian model suggests a dualism in the relationship between the State and University. Neave (1982) suggests that this is not so much differentiating between teaching and learning but more so between areas appropriate to State intervention and those not appropriate.

An alternative model is offered in the Humboldtian concept of university in the 19th century. This concept does not cherish State involvement within university education, rather believing that there should be " a totality of non-intervention expressed in the form of freedom for teaching and research" (Neave, 1982:231). Humboldt's vision of a university was one with a scientific focus, which whilst serving the State would be autonomous of State control, where independent pursuit of scholarship was key (Highman, 2015). Neave (1984) notes that Humboldt's reforms in the early 19th

century have, for many academics, formed an ideal model for the relationship between university and society.

The notion of higher education being a system within which universities were rooted came to the fore after the end of World War II and with this an increase in student numbers in third level (Teichler, 2008). In the U.S.A., for instance, this was prompted by the G.I. bill (1944) which provided a range of benefits including access and financial aid to encourage returning war veterans to engage in third level education, resulting in over 2 million veterans engaging in third level education over the next ten years (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). Lazerson (2015) posits that this growth moved higher education from its position as a public good to one where it was regarded as a private benefit linked to the financial reward and/or ancillary benefits. Post-war higher education's success occurred against a backdrop of public provision of higher education, vocationalism and provision of varieties of postsecondary schooling.

The UK too saw changes in the field of university education following the Second World War. The Butler Education Act (1944) drove the expansion of secondary education which in turn drove the demand for university places. This resulted in evident shortfalls in university provision by the late 1950s which in turn led to the demand for an increased third level sector, with policy makers focused on emphasising the value of science and technology over classical education. A series of reports (Percy Report 1945, Barlow Report 1946) emphasised this focus, calling for the conversion of some technical colleges into institutes of technology and a programme of expansion in

the university field with an emphasis on increasing the number of science graduates to address perceived future shortfalls (National Archives, Cabinet Papers 1915-1986).

Similarly, educational change was gathering force in the 1950s in Ireland leading to the provision of free second level education in 1966 (Walsh, 2011). This facilitated retention of students in the secondary system and increased the pool of potential third level students. Coolahan (2003), in reviewing the constituency of the student body prior to 1950s reflected that a significant number of students participated in humanities and in traditional professional studies such as medicine, with few attracted to science or commerce. Coolahan associated this with a poor economic climate, and also to status effects with technical subjects languishing at the bottom. In 1959 a report was published by the Commission on Accommodation Needs of the NUI Colleges. This report was critical of the lack of attention paid by government to Higher Education (Ó Dálaigh 1959). In 1967, a report echoing very similar findings was issued by the commission on Higher Education. In 1971 the Higher Education Authority was established with the remit of being a body responsible for the cohesive development of the HE sector, allocation of funding, responsible for reviewing policies and strategic plans, and also with ensuring that institutional objectives were in accord with national objectives (Clarke, Kenny & Loxley 2015). These developments, specifically in terms of funding and the aligning of institutional and national objectives were in keeping with those developing in the international arena indicating the dominant influence of the human capital[12] approach in policy formation (Walsh, 2011).

[12] Human capital theory holds that education and/or training contribute to the level of human capital that an individual possesses which influences their earning capacity. This in turn should boost a country's economic growth and productivity (Kavanagh & Doyle, 2006).

However there was a growing awareness, in tandem with that developing in other countries, that changing from a small elite university system available to few, into a HE system available to many, would best serve economic growth (Trow, 1974). From the 1950s onwards State spending in HE increased, as in the UK with a strong emphasis on growing the capacity of science and technology areas. This focus was enhanced following a 1964 OECD report (Walsh, 2011) which highlighted the inadequacy of provision of technical education within Ireland at both secondary and third level. This report resonated with the government of the day, who sought to steer the country away from the protectionist era and improve the economic expansion of the state. As a result regional technological colleges (RTCs) were formed under the oversight of the Department of Education (Coolahan, 2008; Clarke et al., 2015). The effects of these RTCS were manifold; they were placed in regions around Ireland with the intention of addressing the economic and social needs of the area, they provided education for employment in trade and industry, they were specifically available to a wide range of age cohorts, providing part time and fulltime courses, and courses of varying duration, thus satisfying the needs of a diverse student body. They were situated solidly within the Higher Education arena, with courses qualifying for National Council of Ireland awards (Walsh 2011; Kyvik 2004). These RTCs evolved into institutes of technology (IOTs) in 1998. The HE sector in 2014 consists of 7 universities, 14 IoTs, and 20 additional third level institutions.

Therefore, the face of HE has changed in Ireland over several decades from an elite university system of the 1950s which to a large extent sidelined vocational and

technical studies, to a differentiated system (which is geared to being responsive to national economic growth and productivity requirements.

It is beyond the remit of this thesis to cast a lens on the growth and changes in higher education in all countries, however in this overview of the post-war experiences of the USA, the UK and Ireland, it is evident that there has been a growth in third level attendance since the 1960s, driven by more focused attention by governments of the day on the role of higher education in building economies and meeting social demand. Higher education came to be regarded both as a public good (useful to nations in developing their expertise and economies) and a private good (those possessing a higher education improved their chances of gaining higher salaries, benefits, and status) and thus according to Lazerson (1998:65) "achieved a monopoly on middle-class status" with "higher education becoming a licensing agency for Americans who wanted to enter the professions". Another factor highlighted by Lazerson (1998) is the ripple effect where once mass HE came into being, many occupations now began to demand college education as a requirement for entry, in this way increasing their own particular status.

Whilst the 1960s saw expansion of the HE system which was welcomed and promoted by States and their citizenry, the following decades revealed cracks in vision, return and mission. Lazerson (1998) noted that by the 1980s whilst participation in HE had changed from being an opportunity for few to a necessity for many, the economic returns of such an education had lessened, the return in terms of status of some courses and institutions was not assured, and the financial costs of the endeavour had

risen to the extent that they outpaced inflation. Neave (1982) identified a growth in conflict in the relationship between the State and universities since the 1970s, situated in the argument as to the role that universities need to play in society and the extent to which they should offer socially and economically relevant areas of study. In addition he noted an increasing emphasis on excellence in terms of academic reputation and on participation. The 1970s therefore, heralded a time in several countries where governments sought to increase control over third level not only in terms of their contributing to financing the venture, but also in terms of controlling the fields of study catered for in within the system, as well as the numbers and distribution of students within the system. Therefore budgetary control had the effort of pushing reforms of third level systems which would increase the control that states had in terms of educational planning (Neave, 1982). Universities were less in a relationship with the State and more so in a relationship with the labour market. Mass education had developed in conjunction with issues regarding labour market preparedness, accountability and freedom (Neave, 1980). This drove the creation of non-university institutions designed to cater for courses and students not served by universities, with different countries responding in a variety of ways (Kyvik, 2004). Some countries sought to integrate academic and vocational courses within the university system in order to reduce issues of status and to safeguard funding, however the most popular model that has evolved has been the dual (and consequently the binary) system. This facilitates focus on the needs of industry. Similar to the RTCs in Ireland, the UK developed polytechnics which focused on the needs of industry, were located regionally, thus increasing geographical and social access to HE (Kyvik, 2004). Polytechnics filled a void in providing a range of courses that universities could or

would not provide, these courses being vocationally, professionally and industrially based (Neave, 1978; Kyvik, 2004). The dual system[13] of Higher Education therefore, is one where two different systems are recognised, one being universities and the other system including a variety of types of post secondary specialised education institutions. Over time many dual systems have evolved into binary systems whereby multidisciplinary centres are organised with reference to geographical criteria with a view of strengthening the regional economy (Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Denmark and Finland). In the UK there has been a move from dual to binary and then to a unified HE system whereby Polytechnics were re-categorised as universities (Kyvik 2004). Kyvik suggests that the purpose of this was manifold including addressing social class boundaries and achieving economies of scale.

Trow (1974) suggested that transition in higher education could be expressed in terms of tracing elite, mass and universal HE, enrolment beyond 15% of the third level cohort moves the system from elite to universal HE and when enrolments would pass 50% then universal HE would come about.

The intention of this section was to present a cameo of the historical development of HE and the growth of diversity within the sector. This study focuses on diversity within the student body, specifically the inclusion and experiences of mature students. The

[13] Kyvik (2004:394) classifies HE systems as : university dominated, dual systems, binary systems, unified systems and stratified systems.

next two sections will elucidate on the development of policies that impact on lifelong learning from supranational and national perspectives.

2.3 Supranational Historical development of Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning did not have its roots solely in the need to keep pace with technological advancement and provide educated bodies for labour markets. Nor did it come about merely as a result of national attempts to promote an equitable society. Rather the idea of education being beyond that of the traditional students was gathering momentum in many different international spheres broadly dominated by two narratives, one primarily focusing on social justice and the other primarily focusing on economic growth. In addition to non government organisations (NGOs) such as the international council for adult education (IACE), there are four predominant organisations in the supranational sphere that deliberate, pronounce and advise regarding lifelong learning; UNESCO, OECD, the European Union (EU) or the European Community (EC) as it was known previously, and the World Bank. These organisations may differ in their interpretations as to the definition and purpose of lifelong learning but all agree that it encompasses learning from cradle to grave (Jarvis, 2009). The 1970s were a time of change, increasingly there was acknowledgement of the existence of a world economy based on a capitalist system of exchange (Jarvis, 2009). Global capitalism reflected the movement of corporations worldwide driving a need for an educated workforce with up to date skills and knowledge (Jarvis, 2009). Education had become linked with employability and success in the workplace and

thus a healthy labour market, "[lifelong learning is] a combination of learning throughout the lifespan and recurrent education, in which social institutions provide opportunities for individuals to further their learning in topics relevant to their lives, which are most frequently work-based" (Jarvis, 2009:274). There was a dominance of human capital rhetoric in this argument, which saw investment in the individual as yielding economic return, however Jarvis highlights an important point, global corporations do not enact laws, nevertheless states are cognisant of the needs of powerful agencies and corporations and thus may incorporate these bodies requirements and advice into their policies.

The term lifelong learning, (having replaced terms such as recurrent education, continuing education and lifelong education since the 1990s) is significant as, whilst states may facilitate learning through institutions or public/private agreements, the responsibility to be skilled and knowledgeable and thus employable shifted from a focus on State provision to a focus on individual endeavour, reflecting the dominance of human capital theories (Jarvis 2009). Nevertheless, Schuller argues (Jarvis 2009) that even if education was being influenced in the 1970s by human capital theory there was an additional commitment to social objectives.

Since the early 1970s lifelong learning (LLL) has been promoted worldwide by the UNESCO institute for lifelong learning (UIL), (Ouane in Jarvis, 2009:235). UNESCO would be one of the aforementioned organisations most focused on social objectives, engaging with the concept of LLL at the UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education in Montreal in 1960, and from then on LLL has formed a significant part of

the UNESCO lexicon. Twelve years later the Faure Commission report, (UNESCO, 1972) reflected on the positioning of education within a youth domain and in a hierarchical space in both society and schools. This was considered a key report in kickstarting a change in international education policy (Holfort et al., 1998) and was organised around three concepts: vertical integration, horizontal integration and the democratisation of education systems. It identified a need for education to transform from a system focused on youth and on elite towards one focused on providing opportunities for lifelong education for all. UNESCO, under the auspices of its Institute of Education sought to operationalise the aspiration of the Faure report. In the next few years reports (for example: Dave 1976, Cropley 1979) focused on two streams, one being the business of education (the manner in which teachers are trained, changing curriculums and so forth) and the other being the promotion of a better quality of life for both the individual and society as a result of engaging in lifelong education, rather than focusing on a relationship with the marketplace. (Rubenson, 2009). However these reports were criticised for failing to address the impact of politics on the structure within which learning took place, and the significance of this to learning itself, and thus the charge has been made that this damaged the impact of UNESCO's mission (Rubenson, 2009). Rubenson suggests that this polemic was unsuccessful in being translated into anything practical or operational and thus made little impact in policy arenas at transnational or national levels. Furthermore, UNESCO being focused on civil society and civil matters appeared to bear little weight with market orientated organisations (ibid). Seminal reports to issue from UNESCO included the Delors report (1996), CONFINTEA V (1997) and CONFINTEA VI (2009)[14].

[14] Reports emanating from UNESCO are listed under UNESCO in the reference section.

The Delors report "The Treasure Within"(1996) built on the foundations laid by the Faure report (1972) within the context of a global economy. It emphasised that LLL was necessary to bring meaning to life and to equip individuals to be adaptable in order to engage fully with life, thus focusing on why LLL was important rather than what it was important for. Delors recommended that the three UNESCO education institutes, the UIL, the international bureau of education (IBE) and the institute for educational planning (IIEP) focus on action research to build a better understanding and appreciation of the scope of LLL worldwide (Ouane in Jarvis 2009). Four pillars of learning were established: learning to know, to do, to live together and learning to be, thus reflecting the holistic message from UNESCO, rather than one driven by economic imperatives, as could be said of the comparable OECD agenda (Ouane, 2009). The changes wrought by globalisation were recognised by CONFINTEA V. (1997):

> Profound changes are taking place both globally and locally. They can be seen in a globalisation of economic systems, in the rapid development of science and technology, in the age structure and mobility of populations, and in the emergence of an information-based and knowledge-based society. The world is also experiencing major changes in patterns of work and unemployment, a growing ecological crisis, and tensions between social groups based on culture, ethnicity, gender roles, religion and income. These trends are reflected in education, where those responsible for complex education systems are struggling to cope with new opportunities

> and demands, often with declining resources at their disposal. (Confintea V, 1997:9).

However the discourse of lifelong learning remained committed to social justice. Evident within this report is an emphasis on education as something an individual has a right to expect, rather than the rhetoric in OECD papers which overall places the emphasis on the individual to motivate the self to acquire learning. This human centred approach has been central to the UNESCO doctrine (Forrester 1998). Of particular note was the variety of stakeholders beyond state agencies (for example, non-government agencies [NGOs], World Bank, International Labour Office) getting involved in education provision which would as a consequence impact on the constituency of education itself.

One hundred and fifty four countries contributed National reports to CONFINTEA VI (2009) regarding policy and development in adult education in their countries (Global report on Adult Learning and Education: GRALE: 2009). Of the 126 countries who declared they had incorporated adult education either directly or indirectly into policy, only 56 had been able to include specific measures since CONFINTEA V. Of these 56, 27 countries were in the European region (ibid). The reported adherence to forms of policy development within the European region may reflect the Lisbon strategy (Lisbon European Council, 2000) which positioned lifelong learning as vital in promoting Europe as the dominant competitive region in the world. However, CONFINTEA VI not only drew attention to the practical responses of Nations to the challenges raised in

CONFINTEA V, but continued to draw attention to structural inequalities across the globe.

Overall, UNESCO has maintained a humanistic transformative approach to lifelong learning focusing on people acquiring knowledge which would enable them to live peacefully and productively within varied cultures, whilst at the same time paying cognisance to moral and ethical values. This contrasts with the promotion of a market driven "upskilling" approach to lifelong learning, designed to meet global economic demands by the OECD, the EU and the World Bank.

Rubenson (2009) describes UNESCO and OECD as having two more or less competing paradigms. UNESCO takes a humanistic inspired approach to LLL whereas OECD subscribes to an economic inspired paradigm. As discussed in section 2.2, National policies appear to be predominantly influenced by the latter.

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), on the other hand, offered a different perspective on lifelong education. As an organisation dedicated to economic growth it is perhaps understandable that there is an association made between education and the marketplace. "Neo liberalism replaced the Keynesian creed" (Rubenson in Jarvis 2009:413) and had begun to take hold as a dominant ideology in the 1970s which put at the forefront concerns of the market rather than (as expressed by UNESCO) concerns of the development of civil society. The 1980s were times of slow economic growth, increasing uncertainties and rapidly changing work foci towards knowledge and information technologies. Rhetoric was

changing, influenced, for example, by those such as The European Round Table of Industralists (ERT), who used their influence to impress on governments the need to increase market flexibility and to tailor the education system to meet the needs of the market. ERT recommended three changes: involving industrialists in public education, relating higher education to the world of work, and ensuring that LLL is employed to keep pace with technological change and to maintain competitiveness (Rubenson, 2009).

However, this should not be taken to indicate that there is no social dimension to their concept of education, as evidenced in the 1973 OECD report "Recurrent Education: A strategy for lifelong learning", which paid cognisance to the need to engage those excluded or marginalised in society. This was an important document, issued in the same time frame as the Faure report (1972) for UNESCO. After decades of relative neglect LLL was becoming a central policy issue (Rubenson, 2009). The OECD document called for alternative provision, the expansion of education to offer opportunities over the lifecourse, rather than focusing on school leavers, in this sense echoing the need in the Faure report for widening participation agendas in education. International policy discourse on lifelong learning and education in the 1970s, therefore, whilst reflecting on democratic and economic imperatives, refers to social justice in terms of social inclusion in order to broaden the skills base in service of the global economy (Barnett, 2000; Delanty, 2001; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Frank & Gabler, 2006).

Nevertheless the recession of the early to mid-1980s may have hastened the associations between marketplace and education as a way to achieve economic growth. The learning society has been seen increasingly as a consumer market influenced by the concept of human capital theory[15] which implies that national success is dependent on individual and collective cultural capital (Morley, 2003). This leads to the question as to whether the OECD facilitated nations in extending horizons and reconceptualising education from the needs expressed by that nation, or whether the OECD facilitated a different agenda whereby transnational entities express their needs, and these were 'rippled down' thus dominating national discourse in terms of education? Whilst the Faure (1972) and subsequent reports on behalf of UNESCO sought to benefit the individual and society, the OECD's repository of data and potential to generate more data through its bureaucratic links with both the marketplace and nation states, have led overall to the OECD position being reflected in most national policies on education.

Throughout the 1980s neo liberalism gained footholds as nations dealt with recession, the growth and impact of technology, and the changing nature of work. Currie & Newson (1998) suggest that the neoliberal philosophy acclaims concepts of market mechanisms and free trade, which in converting theory to practice cast a wide net and entail applying those concepts not only to private but public services also, including education. This spread of neoliberal philosophy has been evidenced by the spread of

[15] Becker (1975) explains human capital theory as investments in the individual that form part of the individual, for instance investment in education results in the gain of knowledge and skills that the individual cannot be separated from as they could be from their other assets, for instance property or financial investments.

auditing, accounting, quality assurance and benchmarking tools employed cross culturally to arrive at a global consensus (Morley, 2003). Lingard (Morley, 2003:3) states that international organisations such as OECD, whilst issuing recommendations, are in essence acting as policy instruments in that they "act as institutionalizing mechanisms for the new global educational policy consensus." Against this background rhetoric associating education with economic growth and the labour market came to the fore:

> This was now an era of global capitalism, characterised by increased economic competition and rapid advances in information technology. A neo-liberal framework had replaced the Keynesian creed. Education policy was shaped by severe limitations on public expenditures, a general suspicion of state and public institutions, and a belief in the efficiency of free market forces. (Rubenson, 2009:413)

This focus, therefore, on the marriage of education to the needs of the marketplace, and the overarching drive for economic growth has, since the 1980s, grown to dominate the OECD agenda and was emphasised in the 1989 report "Education and the Economy in a Changing Society". This report was issued at a time when Europe sought to emerge from recession, new forms of technology were changing the nature of work and associations with knowledge, and when the birth rate was declining. It established the rhetoric of education for the economy which, despite references to social justice, continues to dominate official reports. Apple (1992) heralds this as a

landmark move away from what education actually is to what education is for. The suggestion being that the education has become embedded in political agendas with a focus on skills rather than knowledge. Skills can be more easily measured, the curriculums controlled and the package that becomes education more easily commodified (ibid).

Further evidence is found in the 1996 OECD report on the knowledge based economy (OECD 96/102) situating OECD economies as based on knowledge and information. This would have knock-on effects on the citizenry of nations in that this knowledge, to be fruitful, had to be embodied in people, therefore giving dominance to the notion of knowledge being human capital (ibid). At this time educational expenditure accounted for 12% of government investment in OECD countries and it was noted that: "It is skilled labour that is in highest demand in the OECD countries." (OECD 96/102:10). This document is important in that it highlights the manner in which 'knowledge' presented a conundrum to traditional theories of economic growth. Previously knowledge would have been seen as an external influence on production, now the emphasis was on moving it into the production function side of spreadsheets. In this way it could be quantified and returns on investment into knowledge measured in the marketplace. Government policies therefore, would need to place a new emphasis on the relationship between education (particularly science and technology) and the economy:

> Acknowledgement is needed of the central role of the firm, the importance of national innovation systems and the requirements for

> infrastructures and incentives which encourage investments in research and training (OECD/GD (96)102:18).

This document, although focused on the economy, is an exemplar of the shift that was occurring throughout the 1990s which solidified the reach of the economy into the educational sphere. The 1996 OECD report on lifelong learning for all, outlined in the policy brief (OECD, February 2004) clearly establishes the notion of lifelong learning as being not recurrent learning or adult education but all types of learning, formal and informal from cradle to grave. A prime focus, even with respect to social justice and equality, was on the individual being equipped to meet the needs of the labour market:

> A number of important socio-economic forces are pushing for the lifelong learning approach. The increased pace of globalisation and technological change, the changing nature of work and the labour market, and the ageing of populations are among the forces emphasising the need for continuing upgrading of work and life skills throughout life.....Firms' drives for greater flexibility has injected precariousness in jobs ... (OECD policy brief 2004:2).

The document continues in a similar vein to prioritise association with the labour market in the 'taken for granted' language flagged by Apple (1992). Both documents of 1989 and 1996 emphasised the need for schools, colleges and universities to be cognisant of the needs of labour markets. Even when the subject matter is recognition

of all forms of learning, including that experienced within the family, the rhetoric is couched in economic imperatives whereby any type of learning (including familial) is presumed to be better if measurable " recognised and visible" and therefore "acts as a powerful psychological and economic incentive for participation in learning activities" which lead to ".. learning within qualification systems, and qualifications systems are important in giving access to further learning and jobs" (ibid). Nevertheless, the OECD perspective (Education at a glance, 2012) suggests that on average, across OECD countries, policies linking education to prosperity have had insufficient saturation as just 50% of 25-34 year olds and 27% of 55-64 year olds have participated in education. The percentages for those attempting to engage in education later in life are more disappointing with only 17% of adults in the 25-34 year old age bracket and 2% of adults in the 55-64 year old age bracket engaging in formal education (ibid). An adult learning thematic review (OECD, 2005a in Rubenson, 2009) focused on the need to make LLL a reality for all and in particular to increase the employability of low and unskilled workers. Governments were encouraged to set in place structural conditions and coordinated policies that would encourage adult participation in HE, however this report emphasised that these policies should be focused on schemes that would leverage earning potential thus again positioning employability as the most desirable return on learning. This report also encouraged investment by private firms in institutions rather than dependence on public financing. This approach is reminiscent of the triple helix as described by Leydesdorff (1997), boundaries between HE, governments and business sectors are blurring such that as national funding of HE diminishes, corporations come to play a more powerful role in influencing HE institutions and agendas in terms of meeting the needs of the private sector.

UNESCO and the OECD were only two of the stakeholders involved in the evolution of the discourse surrounding lifelong learning, however as neo liberalism gained a strong foothold from the 1980s, Rubenson (2009) posits that OECD has had a considerable advantage over UNESCO in spreading its dogma and influence as it has an widespread reach into national policies due to an extensive bureaucratic interface with national systems. Thus it was able to set policy agendas that gradually become taken for granted "rules of ideas" that then influence national policy makers' approaches to education reform.

Others include the World Bank (with a prime focus on developing countries), the EC (and its successor the EU) and NGOs such as IACE (The International Council for Adult Education). In 2001 IACE began evaluating the actions of national governments in implementing agreements made voluntarily at CONFINTEA V (Tuckett, 2009). These evaluations formed the basis for a report "Agenda for the Future- Six Later." The ICAE report (2003) concludes that of the countries monitored, most governments focused policy on work related learning, paying less credence to issues of active citizenship. ICAE continues to be an advocate of adult education and knowledge sharing with representative groups in many countries, for example Aontas in Ireland and NICAE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) in the UK.

The EU declared a European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996. In common with the OECD, although there is cognisance paid to promoting social cohesion (EC, 2001) the overriding theme is the promotion of the relationship between the economy and

education (Jarvis, 2009). This is particularly evidenced in the 2010 Education and Training programme, which aims to maintain individual national sovereignty in education policy whilst at the same time aiming to cooperate in European benchmarking and form common responses to common concerns. The Bologna Process (2010)[16] is an exemplar of this, aiming to set standards and establish quality assurance with respect to qualifications in the higher education arena across participating European countries. Nevertheless, the 2006 report on Adult Learning – *It's never too late to learn* (EC 2006) notes that despite adherence to the concept in the rhetoric of most member states, there was little evidence to suggest substantive changes had occurred at national level. A number of recommendations have been made which include goal setting for participation levels, attention being paid to those impeded by barriers such as cost, life situation, disability and age. Engagement with a variety of stakeholders is encouraged, establishment of benchmarking and best practise in use of structural funding. Over time, therefore, since 2000, the rhetoric of economics has continued to drench official documents at the expense of alternative emphasis in lifelong learning.

The Lifelong Learning programme (2007-2013) was established within the EU to finance and bring together under one umbrella a spectrum of training and education programmes. Broadly, these programmes covered education from early years through to university education, encompassing adult education, student exchange, vocational education, technological and language education. An aspiration of this streamlining

[16] The Bologna Process was launched in 1999 by Education Ministers and university leaders of 29 countries (growing to 49 countries over time), participation was voluntary.

approach was to encourage European benchmarking and integration, with a budget of 7 billion euro for lifelong learning for the timeframe of the programme. The Irish Modernisation agenda (2011) links higher education systems to the knowledge economy and deems reform necessary in four areas; increase in the number of HE graduates, improving teaching and researcher training, equipping graduates with transferable competencies and strengthening the knowledge triangle (education, research and business). This agenda reinforces a business orientated third level doctrine leaving little room for debate with respect to alternative epistemologies. The Beflex survey (2009) noted that 53% of universities regarded "responding to the employment needs of the labour market as the first purpose of lifelong learning," whereas 35% saw stimulating personal development by providing personal development programmes for graduates "as their first priority in relation to lifelong learning." Modernisation of Higher Education, therefore, at this juncture, appears to be situated in the discourse of the demise of academic autonomy, massification and the wedding of Higher Education to the needs of the labour market (Morley 2003, Finnegan 2008) succinctly described by (Polster, 2003:7) as the "corporatisation agenda."

This section has outlined the emergence of lifelong learning from diverging discourses in education over decades to arrive at the concept linking it to economic growth. The next section reflects on whether, or to what extent, National policies reflect on recommendations emanating from these supranational entities and the manner in which they are put into practise.

2.4 National Development of Lifelong Learning

The changing face of lifelong learning policy within Ireland has mirrored the economic rationales issuing from Europe reflecting a dominance of human capital theory. The impact of neoliberalism is evident (Grummell, 2007) in terms of the focus being on the individual to engage in education rather than the State to change existing structures with the aim that structural anomalies and disadvantage are extinguished. There has been evidence of social and cultural changes within the Irish State over the last half century which has seen a rise in participation and diversity in third level education, however the most significant change was the politically driven association of Higher Education with economic development (Loxley, Seery & Walsh, 2014) According to O'Sullivan in (Loxley et al., 2014) the human capital paradigm evident in international discourse has gradually replaced theocentric thinking as the political and institutional framework in the Irish tertiary system. This has led to neoliberalism not only influencing economic policy but forming cultural hegemony, reflected in the commodification of social goods and services including education (Finnegan, 2008).

The official genesis of lifelong learning in the Irish domain is most often cited as the establishment of Aontas in 1969 which drew together organisations and individuals interested in promoting adult literacy and adult education. Many of these organisations had been formed under the umbrella of Catholic interests. Early educational institutions to get involved included the National College of Industrial

Relations (Sandford), and the Institute of Catholic Sociology at Mountjoy Square.[17] Other stakeholders included trade unions who established a People's College modelled on that provided by workers' federations in the UK (Fleming 2012). This is of note, in that although the Church might have appeared the dominant voice in adult education, it was not the lone voice.

A seminal report, Investment in Education (1965) was significant in the future development of education policy in Ireland. Primarily it aimed to increase the capacity of the educational system to service economic growth and in addition began to engage in the process of aiming to reduce inequalities in levels of participation. This report paved the way for the introduction of a free secondary school scheme in 1967 for participating secondary schools which led to a significant increase in retention rates (Coolahan, 1981). This report, produced in co-operation with OECD (Smyth, 2003) was important in bringing European agendas and discourse more into the public domain. The need to address education and literacy, associating education with economic growth and therefore highlighting the need to invest in education, were filtering into the Irish political psyche and together with changes in media (for instance, the introduction of television in 1961) and scholarship[18] abroad were slowly, very slowly beginning to lessen the domination that the Catholic Church had on education. Aontas is affiliated with the European Bureau of Adult Education and over the years has

[17] National College of Industrial Relations (Sandford) and The Institute of Catholic Sociology are now known as the National College of Ireland, and Dublin Adult Learning Centre.

[18] Fleming (2012) credits opportunities to study abroad in institutions where adult education was a discipline rather than a module in sociology as vital in introducing new elements into the discourse surrounding social justice.

established itself as a think-tank for adult education and as a lobby group advocating for change.

The Murphy report of 1973 (one year after the publication of the Faure report), and in the same year as the OECD report on lifelong learning, sought structural changes to the way in which education was catered for within the State structures and saw adult education as a field in its own right, with over twenty steps outlined as necessary to develop a functioning adult education system in Ireland. From this point onwards the concept of adult education as part of lifelong learning, would always be a constituent in Irish educational policy. However, change comes slowly, despite the many recommendations made, the prime change was to appoint adult education organisers to VECs at local level and the establishment of a separate Adult Education Section by the Department of Education in 1980 (AONTAS, 2009).

The next major government report commission (Kenny, 1984) painted a bleak picture of adult education in Ireland at this time, reflecting Ireland's slip into an economic recession. It noted not only that approximately one third of the adult population had not engaged in education beyond mid teens but that many felt very alienated from the educational process. This report highlighted that little had changed in the decade since the Murphy report had been published, particularly in terms of structure, with inequalities in respect to social class, location and gender continuing to dominate. Of particular note, was the call by the Kenny report to introduce flexible entry requirements and adult friendly initiatives such as part-time third level study opportunities. The Kenny report paid cognisance to the need for education to respond

to the challenges in creating economic growth to enable the country to emerge from the recession of the 1980's. However, it also emphasised the role of adult education in building a strong civil society. The term lifelong learning was established in the Irish lexicon and reference made for:

> A structure at national and local level is required so that the economic and social benefits for all people can be availed of to the fullest extent and the available resources can be used efficiently and effectively within a democratic framework (Kenny, 1984:120).

Relatively little operational change emerged as a result of the Kenny report. However, from this time onwards the necessity to provide learning opportunities throughout the lifetime continued to dominate policy documents both in the arenas of education and of employment, again mirroring dogma beyond National borders. The Programme for National Recovery (1987-1991) and ensuing social partnership agreements highlighted the contribution education makes to economic growth and social cohesion. Therefore, a conception of how to provide this education to adults has evolved, and with it an understanding of structural injustice inherent in the normative models of provision within education. Participation in tertiary education was mainly the remit of young secondary school leavers from middle class (and above) backgrounds (O'Connell, Clancy & McCoy, 2006). Emphasis remained situated on how to improve access from disadvantaged (in terms of social class background, disability and age) groups.

The Government 1992 Green paper "Education for a Changing World" sought to broaden the Irish concept of education, to include those who are disadvantaged, and to prepare individuals to achieve their potential in the workforce. Concrete developments following on from this, included the introduction of financial provisions (student assistance fund) to help those on whom third level education would place financial hardship, and additional routes of access for those not having the requisite entry requirements. This paper was particularly important as it signalled significant State intent on being actively and minutely involved in guiding the development of Higher Education in the direction of third level education- industry interaction and seeking greater accountability from institutions in terms of their contribution to developing this relationship (Walsh in Loxley et al., 2014). Following on the White paper "Charting our Education Future 1995" positioned the State, with regard to education, as being concerned with economic growth in addition to social justice. From this perspective, the role of HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) and their function in facilitating a broader social mix within the college population, in addition to being a partner in economic recovery, was emphasised. 1996 saw the abolition of fees for third level institutions within the State, which was heralded as a move to facilitate those from lower socio economic groups to gain access to the benefits of a higher education. Although this initiative has been joined by others over time (alternative access routes, foundation courses and "Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools" (DEIS) research has indicated that there remains insufficient social diversity within third level institutions (Clancy 1995, 2001; Fleming, Loxley, Kenny & Finnegan, 2010; O'Connell, Clancy & McCoy, 2006; Denny, 2010; McCoy, Byrne, Kelly & Doherty, 2010).

However, 1998 was the year when adult education gained prominence with the publication of a Green paper on Adult education defining it as:

> All systematic learning by adults, which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society, apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training.
> (Green Paper, 1998:16).

This paper emphasised the concept of lifelong learning as being for the whole of the lifespan and not only the initial (pre, primary and secondary) arenas. It noted mature students comprised only 3% of the undergraduate population and that there was little social class diversity within the academy. Although strategies were put in place to ameliorate these problems, there was an argument to be made that such strategies were propping up structures that had facilitated inequality in the first place (Fleming 2012). Of particular note was the increasing dominance of the contribution education must pay to economic growth:

> This Paper recommends a balanced approach to Adult Education, incorporating economic considerations within a broader spectrum of issues, including personal, social, cultural and environmental concerns. Nonetheless, it is crucially important that, in an era of rapid economic growth and job creation, education and skill

> deficiencies must not pose a barrier to any person in accessing a livelihood (Green paper, executive summary: 1998)

The need to engage a more complex social mix in HE was addressed in the 1999 Final Report and Recommendations from the Commission on the Points System whereby entry quotas were established for those without the requisite points from the Leaving Certificate examinations. These quotas were to increase on a phased basis to 25% by 2025. The White paper that followed a year later "Learning for life: White paper on Adult Education", continued in a similar vein, establishing lifelong learning as the 'governing principle of educational policy" (executive summary). A targeted HE mature student fund was to be introduced which would increase funding up to E10m per annum to third level institutions to shift their strategies to incorporate adult friendly policies. Fees were also abolished for third level part-time students who qualified under certain social criteria such as family income supplement holders. It also identified a demand for (and current provision of) distance learning routes to counteract geographical impediments. These were important strategies in facilitating mature students who may not have been in a position to leave paid employment and return to college, and to those who had established jobs and families in areas not served by third level institutions. The White paper (2000) was never turned into legislation however a review conducted by the Higher Education Authority in 2005 found that overall the trend to enhancing equality of access to under-represented groups (including mature students) has been, to varying extents, maintained. There have been nearly three times as many overall admissions to third level in 2003 than in 1980 with an increase of 2% since 1998. In 2003 mature students represented 8% of

the University population, 7% of the Institutes of Technology (IoT), 11% of Colleges of Education and 24% of other colleges (ibid). A report conducted by Carroll and Patterson (2011) notes that in 2010/2011, 15% of all new full time students were mature students, and 92% of all new part-time students were mature individuals, suggesting the appeal of being able to combine studying with other roles for mature students. There is a significant difference between the percentage of mature students attending (fulltime) IoTs (20%) and Universities (11%). Carroll et al., (2011) suggest this may be due to IoTs being more prolific regionally, which may be a significant factor for mature individuals with family responsibilities or work in specific areas. Reviewing mature engagement with third level from 2005 to 2006, Carroll et al., (2011) noted little percentage change in attendance at either universities or at IoTs. However from 2009/10 to 2010/11 there was a significant increase in attendance at IoTs (rising from 12% in 06/07 to 17% in 09/10 and 20% in 2011), whilst university attendance was at 10% in 2006/07 and rose to 11% by 2009/10. It was suggested that this was due not only to the convenience of proximity but also due to the downturn in the economy and the marketing conducted by local IoTs to attract mature students.

The OECD review of Higher Education in Ireland (2004) after reviewing specific areas within HE (including strategic management and structure, investment, finance and international competitiveness) singled Ireland out for particular praise as being one of the first countries to grasp and act upon the importance of education to the economy. However the report also highlighted findings from the Clancy report (2001) which drew attention to the social disparity of entrants coming into the system from school, with only 20% representation from children of unskilled and semi-skilled workers compared

to 80% of children of employers and managers, and nearly 100% of children from higher professional backgrounds. However, this is not particular to Ireland but a pattern evident in other European countries also. It drew attention to the need to increase the provision of part-time education as an established route into third level education, to formalise accreditation of prior learning and to simplify credit transfers especially for mature students who will be needed to fulfil future manpower needs. The attention to means of satisfying future manpower needs is a dominant feature of this report, with IoTs specifically mentioned as being best placed to serve the widening participation agenda in terms of local access, part time courses, mature students and the potential to attract more students from less advantaged socio-economic groups than universities. Whilst IoTs undoubtedly contribute great benefits in all these areas both to the State and the populace, one would wonder why universities are not charged with the same remit.

In 2005 a review report commissioned by the HEA, summarised actualities and projections for fulltime mature students within third level, but included in the figures second time entrants intake:

Table 2-1: Mature students (ms) in third level education (actual and projected)

Year	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8	2010-11	2013-14	2015-16
(ms)	4,473	4,979	5,490	5,829	6,190	7,955	9,016	10,865

The findings of this review (HEA, 2005) suggest that recommendations of previous policy papers (such as the green and white papers of 1995) has gained foothold within policy and institutional practice.

The changes to HE to accommodate lifelong learning and non traditional students outlined above were not the only challenges facing institutions. Skilbeck (2003) reported on the changes inherent in moving from a binary system to a cascading system of provision. The binary system comprised of universities and technological institutions, the cascade system thought to better reflect the blurring of boundaries between both providers. What is notable in the Skilbeck report is the guardianship of boundaries as expressed by some within the academy and, in a sense a fear of change. Skilbeck notes that many institutions already engage in non-degree work and that universities can no longer claim an essentialist definition of purpose. This highlights a conundrum: if there is a strong sense of remaining still how can the changing facilitations influence or change fundamentals in HE, which would have contributed to inequality in the first place? However, the Skilbeck report (written at a time when the Celtic Tiger was waning) does not ponder on this aspect of HE, but has as a dominant narrative, a focus on the welding of education to economic growth:

> Ireland has now entered what is widely seen as a critical phase in economic and social development. Perhaps less well appreciated is that the pulse of education reform must be quickened if the country's highly ambitious socio-economic goals are to be achieved ... This means that all institutions and parts of institutions ... need to demonstrate a clear understanding of and responsiveness to the changing environment and changing socio-economic needs (Skilbeck, 2003 :9/10).

Throughout the 1990s, the lifelong learning agenda had gained momentum. A series of Acts were instituted including the Universities Act (1997) which highlighted the role of universities in promoting lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education, and the promotion of equality of opportunity. However, of particular note in this Act was the association between LLL and national economic development, highlighting once again the impact of human capital approaches, in this instance being enshrined in legislation. There was also the Employment Equality Act (1998) which opposed discrimination in education as well as other areas, the Education Act (1998) which promoted equality of access and opportunity, and the Qualification and National Training Act (1999) which was considered an important document from National and International perspectives as it sought to streamline education and training qualifications. From a service provider and user perspective this intention is relevant as it aims to ensure quality of standards in service providers and places the ultimate responsibility for awards in the hands of the Department of Education and Skills.

In the 2000s further efforts were made to redress inequalities and promote the lifelong learning agenda. Under the National Development plan 2000-2006 amongst the measures proposed was funding totalling E12 million aimed at tackling under representation by three target groups: students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, and students with disabilities. This was a particular noteworthy factor as it sought to recognise the heterogeneity of disadvantage. The 2007-2013 National Development Plan "Transforming Ireland, a better life for all" continued to

commit to Lifelong learning policy. However it furthered the link between education and the labour force by viewing lifelong learning as "the guiding principle for education and training policy in the context of the Lisbon agenda." It claims to safeguard the independence of Higher Education's intellectual insights whilst at the same time noting "research and innovative indigenous enterprises becoming the new drivers of economic development and of the countries international competitiveness" (National Development Plan, 2007-2013:201). E 13 billion had been set aside for Higher Education, in order to fund infrastructure, development and strategic innovation. Ireland's success in adherence to the Lisbon dogma was evident in the OECD review of Higher Education (2004):

> Ireland was one of the first European countries to grasp the economic importance of education and economists suggest that this upskilling of the labour force accounts for almost 1% per annum of additional output over the last decade or so. (OECD, 2004: 202).

The National Access Office was established in 2003 to coordinate a fragmented funding system and develop a national strategy on access which was launched in 2004 (HEA, 2005). Building on the Achieving Equity of Access Action Plan 2005-2007 (2004), The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2008-2013) elaborates on the targets set for increasing participation, including mature students to comprise 20% of total full time entrants by 2013, and 27% of all full and part-time entrants by 2013. All socio economic groups were to have entry rates of 54% by 2020 with targets of 27% set for non manual groups and 33% set for semi skilled and unskilled manual groups by

2004. The number of students with disabilities admitted to third level was set to double by 2013 and the number students availing of part-time courses set to increase to 17%. Not only did this document set out to operationalise change it also included dominant references to the development of civic society as well as the knowledge society. It identified education as part of the social structure and in that context, part of wider inequality, that the proposed changes sought to address. Current figures suggest that full time mature students (for years, 2012/13) represent 13%, and full and part-time students combined represent 19% of the third level student population, there has been a 27-30% increase in participation from non manual groups and 33-36% for semi-skilled groups (including mature students), the number of students with disabilities within the college population has increased to 6% and the number of people engaging in part-time third level courses has risen to 16% (HEA, 2014). A new National Plan is now being prepared for the period 2014-2017.

These documents and policy positions evolved over a period which saw the dramatic demise of the Celtic Tiger and the dawn of another recession. From the 1970s education has been linked with economic recovery, from the 1990s with economic prosperity and now again it is being seen as vital in economic recovery (HEA, 2003; 2014). Little attention is paid at policy level as to whether such linkages might in fact have contributed to the Recession (Fleming 2012) rather the marriage is regarded as indissoluble and all energy is focused on keeping it viable, as evidenced in the next report of particular note, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (also known as the Hunt report 2011) which reiterates the role education played and must continue to play in economic recovery. Although calling for structural changes, from a

rational viewpoint (in terms of servicing the labour market) it seeks to consolidate resources rather than to express and capture diversity in expression of education, to the extent that there is little reference to the cultural value of education, for instance the need to be "creative, imaginative and responsive" is not of itself sufficient, it has to be harnessed to serve the vision of education as a tool in economic recovery. (Hunt 2011:51). The Hunt document firmly establishes the priorities of a rational approach to education within the national context but also within the broad global arena and in doing so investing in "Ireland's global relationships" (Hunt 2011:81). Frequently mention is made of the relationships between the business community and academia and HE institutions are extolled to insure that their institutional vision is in line with the National agenda. There is an emphasis on more graduates, more qualifications, more research, indeed a "critical mass" is deemed as being necessary to take our place on the global stage. It is within this context that mature studentship is valued in this report. Attention is drawn to the projected needs of qualified graduates up to the year 2030. There will be too small a pool of traditional aged graduates to service the projected needs of the labour market and thus it is anticipated that:

> The bulk of increased demand will come from late entrants, mature students and international students ... of these categories the largest proportionate increase will be among mature students (Hunt 2011: 44).

Hunt (2011) notes that 21% of Irish adults have third level qualifications at level 8 or higher. However this varies across age groups: 25-34 year olds (30%); 35-44 year olds

(23%); 45-54 year olds (17%); 55-64 year olds (12%). Therefore, according to Hunt, an envisioned future of high unemployment, unstable employment and the changing types of employment (growth of the knowledge economy) will condition and orient mature adults to engage in further education. The landscape of education is expected to change therefore, and provide more part-time opportunities and flexible learning so as to facilitate mature individuals (ibid).

In response to these National plans, Trinity College Dublin has launched two strategies (2003-2008 and 2009-2014) which contain commitments to increase diversity in the undergraduate population "...equality of access to all, seeking out and recognising talent where it exists...Clear and transparent accountability to society" (2009:iv). Trinity has run an access programme (TAP) with links to schools in the "Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) school scheme and with community groups. This foundation course is available to both young people from designated disadvantaged areas and to mature individuals.

This section has attempted to illuminate the manner in which the Irish state has interpreted recommendations made by supranational entities as to how best to develop education in the relatively new guise of lifelong learning. It has shown how over the decades the growth in attempts to change the constituency of the student population, has predominantly sought to serve the labour market. The next section will offer insight into the key ongoing debates concerning the welding of education to the economic agenda.

2.5 Critique of Lifelong Learning Agenda

The dominant criticism evoked by the welding of third level education to the labour market is that it subsumes education into a neo liberal dogma which prioritises economic growth at the expense of other facets of education and other functions of education, for instance contribution to social justice, personal growth, non-institutional learning and engagement in civic society (Mezirow, 1991; Field, 2009; Gouthro, 2009). Finnegan (2008) noted that whilst there has been an acknowledgement of non-institutional learning as important, it has not been emphatic enough to gain a strong conceptual or operational foothold as policy continues to wed education to economic policy. Fleming (2004) noted that the prioritising of economic prosperity and its dominance in labour and education policies over the last few decades has resulted in the collapse of many pillars within the state, including the banking industry and the construction industry and by extension communities and families. Yet it is business and industry that have insisted and continue to insist on having an input into the framing of education, thus exploiting education in propping up a system of governance that has already catastrophically failed. There is support for this viewpoint, and the belief that, within Ireland (and elsewhere) there is a functionalist perspective of education, educational provision and services which pays little heed to structural issues of power and control, focusing instead on changing admission policies and tinkering with socio-economic group (SEG) heterogeneity percentages thus not adequately addressing these issues, affording any meaningful change to social order, nor permitting other perspectives of education (Grummell 2007, Brine 2006, Healy & Slowey 2006, Lynch 2006, Fleming & Murphy 1997). The

HEA (2008, 2014) seeks to continue to promote greater access and wider participation as a measure of success. However, there is a lack of clarity as to what defines successful participation; is it admission rates, engagement, completion, procurement of employment post tertiary education, or any other manner of measurement (Loxley et al., 2014; McCoy, Byrne, Kelly & Doherty, 2010). From this perspective it is difficult to ascertain how social justice is served, simply by drawing more people into the third level education fold. By creating more graduates, third level institutions are adding not only to the labour market, but to State capacity building, thus putting emphasis on potential wealth creation rather than actual wealth distribution. Structural determinants have not been changed, merely reallocating rather than transforming society (Kenway & Langmead, 1998).

Duke (1992) cites the European year of Lifelong Learning (1996) as the defining moment when education succumbed to reductionism and focused on the development of skills based agendas, with universities' raison d'être being the provision of services to meet the demands of the consumers. Universities therefore were seen as little more than holding companies where subsidiaries would operate, compete, cajole, in a similar fashion to other companies. Finnegan (2008) argues that this reductionist viewpoint leads to a society that accepts inequality, with public goods being replaced by private interests. In a similar vein, Neubauer & Ordonez (in GUNI 2008:52) note that globalisation has rendered universities as 'effective agents in the global knowledge economy'. Commenting on the endemic changes wrought by globalisation in social, economic and political spheres, it followed that the role of Higher Education in particular would be affected, as it is a factor of influence in all

three spheres. This has resulted in a two pronged attack on the University sector in that it is regarded as an engine of reproduction for the elite, in addition to being an engine of massification for all social strata (ibid).

However, Marginson (1997) has offered an alternative perspective and addressed the marketisation and massification of education in terms of student goods and knowledge goods. Student goods are training goods and self goods. Training goods can be purchased in the marketplace by employers. Self goods are positional goods, associated with social improvement and self satisfaction. Positional goods are considered to be status goods as they are presumed to give the student a certain level of advantage. The knowledge good is, in a sense, the patented property. An argument is offered that massification (in terms of those receiving a third level education) increases the amount of knowledge goods and positional goods in circulation, and serves social justice, nevertheless there are a series of recognisable problems ensuing as a result. These problems include: a growth in credentialisation that can reduce the value of education in terms of the power attached to the positional good, the graduate may not get either the financial or social reward commensurate with his/her degree as a consequence as employers are fishing in a plentiful pool, employers and professional groups tend to guard the status of their profession, intensifying the screening processes, and raising the educational requirements to enter the profession, resulting in a need for students and workers to invest in increasing levels of higher education. The behaviour of those guarding entry to their profession resonates with Bourdieu & Passeron's (1977) concepts of cultural capital and habitus whereby people on different strata in the social sphere have ways of "being and doing" that serve

their group/strata needs. When individuals attempt to move between strata, lacking the full remit of cultural capital and habitus of those already populating that strata level may result in them being unable to exercise the rewards commensurate with that particular strata level. Thus massification whilst increasing the possibility of getting a third level education, and contributing to an extent to social justice, also drives up job specification to the extent that a college degree may now be needed where previously a second level qualification would suffice (ibid). As noted by Hirsch (1977: 620) "if everyone stands on tiptoe, no one sees better". However, Ryan & Heim (1997) argue that with failing government funding it is understandable that universities and corporations develop working relationships. This they suggest is beneficial to society, the universities and to students. Inglis (1997) holds a somewhat different viewpoint, in viewing the marriage of education and the work force as a way in which employers convince workers to adopt the companies' goals as their own and in doing so get people to assimilate into a particular social order. These marketisation processes have changed the way in which we approach, engage in and understand education (Lynch, 2006). They are evidence of, according to Finnegan (2008:7)

> Neoliberal public pedagogies operating across culture impose [ing] a form of lifelong learning based on the needs of the market... The Irish State has managed to achieve this within a framework of free market thinking whilst using the rhetoric of welfare and social justice (ibid).

Research attempts to explain the draw of the "elite" with respect to college education. It is suggested that elitism results not only from the protection of a status item (for instance the reputation of an institution), but more importantly from the opinion of others as to the value of that status (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bowles, 1976; Bowles, Gintis & Groves, 2005; Brennan 2002; Frank & Cook, 2010; Hansen, 2001; Hopper, 1981, Karabel 2006, Williams 2009, Windolf,1997). This is useful to reflect upon, as Trinity College is considered an elite institution regularly achieving high rankings in the world league tables of universities (Times Higher Education Supplement, World University Rankings 2013-2014). Universities near the top of the academic pyramid, therefore attract more students than there are vacancies and as a consequence a higher status is attached to their graduates and they are more likely to be targeted by high end businesses. Frank et al., (2010) suggest that the notion of elite status has increased significance within a globalised world with a sharp focus on economic growth. Many reasons are proffered in explanation, including the perceived potential to earn good salaries and benefits (from the student perspective) and the preoccupation with ranking that is evident not only in education but also in industry and business. If firms only employ those whom they perceive to be the best and brightest graduates from the prestigious and elite institutions, then they can command higher fees for their services. With respect to admission to TCD, most enter through the central applications office on the points system described earlier in this chapter. This would suggest that an elite education is within the grasp of all individuals from any sphere in society, who have acquired the relevant qualifications. However to accept this suggestion not only ignores structural and financial inequalities inherent in Irish society, but fails to recognise the manner in which TCD manages to maintain an

elite status is not only in the education itself, but also by often requiring higher points than similar institutions for admissions to similar programmes, and facilitating a smaller number of students in their undergraduate degree programmes.

The notion of equality in opportunity with respect to third level attendance is the site of much debate (Lynch, 1999; O'Connell, Clancy & McCoy, 2006; Smyth & McCoy, 2009). A key strategy in the Higher Education National Plan for equity of access to HE (2008-2013) was to have all socio economic groups represented by at least 54% by 2020. Whilst there has been improvement in representation of all social groups, those from middle class professional and farming groups continue to dominate (Clancy, 1995; O'Connell et al., 2006,; Denny, 2010; Fleming, Loxley, Kenny & Finnegan, 2009; Loxley et al., 2014). Most of this increase seems to be within younger age groups suggesting that frontloading continues to dominate over lifelong learning (Slowey, 2012). The type of schooling available at primary and secondary levels within locales, the quality of teaching therein, the involvement of family, the ability of family to pay for extra tuition and so forth, all have a substantive effect on the possibility of college attendance (McCoy et al., 2010; Whelan and Hannan, 1999; Feinstein, Duckworth & Sabates, 2008; Murphy, 2009; Smyth, 2009).

Another key criticism with respect to lifelong learning delivered within a neo liberal agenda is that it shifts the emphasis from the State to educate onto the individual to be educated (Finnegan, 2008; Hargreaves, 1980; Lawson, 1998; Inglis, 1997). Grummell (2007) notes that such action further ensures that there is little chance of critical analysis as to the dogma of education beyond discourse surrounding widening

participation. Seeing education in its present form as a controlling force, replicating social order in the service of economic growth, she sees little opportunity for any activism or advocacy objectives gaining resonance unless they do so as part of the current system (ibid). Bauman (1998) and Gorostiaga (1999) argue that social exclusion is inevitable as a result of living in a globalised world, lacking human capital rather than natural resources. However, Luke & Luke (Morley, 2003:2) argue that this discourse promotes deficit modelling, placing the individual in "a victim narrative, robbed of agency, stripped of authenticity, and reduced to nothing more than a hapless consumption machine." Griffin (2006) argues that the focus on the individual within education is essentially a banking model which requires a cultural shift away from State provision of educational services towards a system whereby individual has complete responsibility for all aspects of his/her life including education. However, Barret (1996) suggests that the substitution of the term student for customer goes beyond semantic and does a great injustice to education. Student implies an enquiring mind, a critical awareness and a thirst for knowledge, all situated within the creation and advancement of a wider sphere of knowledge, whereas to be a customer implies a need to be satisfied with the end product (ibid). Field (1996) offers a different perspective suggesting that lifelong education can justifiably be regarded as a form of consumption in terms of personal choice, consumer orientated public policy, and the dominance of human capital theory in public policy and educational planning.

The discourses, therefore, surrounding lifelong learning appear to either situate it as a tool of oppression in the sense that present social policy weds education to the marketplace and perpetuates structural disadvantage, or a tool of liberty in the sense

that it is attempting to facilitate change, empowers people and gives them choices. Either there is acceptance that neoliberalism shapes policies which are detrimental to substantive change and social justice or neoliberalism shapes policies which empower the individual to define his/her life-trajectory. Such approaches leave little room either to contemplate on the nature of education itself beyond its function in operant conditioning or to consider the contribution the student can make to education as well as take from it.

2.6 Mature students in Higher Education

It is suggested that viewing lifelong education through the prism of mature studentship can extend the academic debate beyond the somewhat functionalist interpretations that seem to dominate discussion. As outlined earlier, mature individuals represent one of the cohorts targeted by policies aimed at increasing the diversification of the college going population. Such individuals may or may not come from disadvantaged social backgrounds, may or may not have disabilities, the only criteria necessary is to be over twenty three years of age in year of entry. Reaction to policies of inclusion have not always been positive, with criticism as to their success at achieving a social mix and an age mix (Clancy,1995; Fleming et al., 2009; HEA 2011; Lynch & O'Neill, 1994; McGarthy &Duffy, 1999; Osbourne &Leith, 2000; Ryan, 2004; Staunton, 2008). Interpreting social demographics is a complex task and open to a myriad of often contesting interpretations. For instance, Fleming (2013) noted that 55% of students engaged on a university access course cited their own socio economic

group as non manual. This would be a positive indication of the success of inclusion policies as the non manual group is one targeted in the HEA (2008) widening participation agenda. However, when these adults were asked about their parents' social group, 38% cited having parents who belonged to three higher socio economic groups than their own SEG. Fleming offers this as evidence that mechanisms designed to attract lower income groups and underrepresented learners are ineffective and that privileged are merely becoming more privileged. Preston (2006) holds a similar viewpoint with regard to adult education in the UK, referring to stealth policies which do little to promote inclusion and are more likely to facilitate social class strategies aimed at retaining advantage. Nevertheless, he highlights the fact that a focus on seeking heterogeneity and class fractions can lead to failure to appreciate commonalities between working class and middle class experiences. Bourdieu et al., (1990) hold that cultural capital or lack thereof has the capacity to facilitate progression through the social hierarchy, (possibly evidencing the contested success of social inclusion policies) even if possessing significant educational credentials. However, Bloomer & Hodkinson (2000) regard cultural capital as something invested in the individual and not necessarily a collective property of a particular social class. The individual is a repository of various resources and identities, therefore social class membership is not finite but a process. This is an important point, as it highlights the difficulty in measuring social mobility as an outcome based on social class or socio economic group movement.

With respect to age participation, as noted in figure 2.1, for the periods of 2000/01 and 2004/05[19], age participation decreases sharply from the early twenties onwards, with a slight rise in the mid twenties – thirties age group. This suggests that, despite an emphasis on encouraging mature individuals to engage in education throughout the lifetime, the dominant practise, at that time and in the present time, remains front loading. In the samples drawn from UCC, UL, NUIM, TCD and DIT respectively, Staunton (2008), Ryan (2004), Fleming et al., (2009) have brought attention to the diminishing representation of older ages in universities. For the later three institutions, participation rates of undergraduate entrants have decreased from 46% (29-39 year olds) to 29% (40-49 year olds), 17% (50-59year olds) and 6% (60 years plus). These findings have been reflected in the Hunt report (2011) as elaborated upon earlier in this chapter.

Current aspirations (HEA, 2014) focus on increasing tertiary attainment in the 30-34 year old age group to 60% by 2020. Although mature studentship is a minority group, it is nonetheless a significant minority group. It is a heterogeneous lot, consisting of individuals who have deviated from what is considered normative; the parallel progression of their life-cycles and life trajectories. They bring to the academy a myriad of life experiences, and have to negotiate their roles and relationships whilst forging a student identity.

[19] Of particular relevance to this thesis as the time period being explored is 1995-2005.

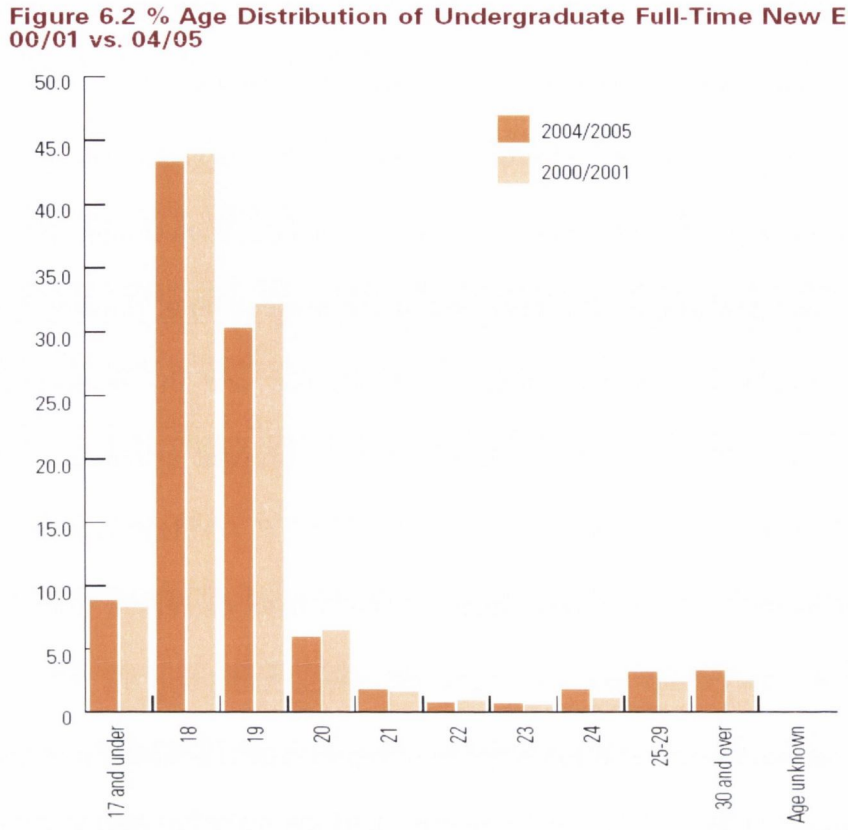


Figure 2-1: Reproduced from Slowey 2012[20]

Much has been made (in policy documents and commission reports) of the benefits of a higher education in terms of improving an individual's potential rewards in engaging in the labour market. However, research suggests a complex picture, which is confounded by many factors including age and gender. A large proportion of mature graduates attend third level institutions aspiring to enhance their career opportunities (Staunton, 2008; Fleming et al., 2009; Purcell, Wilton & Elias., 2007; Ryan, 2004; Trinity Access Programme [TAP], 2010). Loxley (in Fleming et al., 2009) noted that 46% of attendees had decided to engage in third level to improve employment prospects and 65% believed the degree they chose to follow was vital for the career they wanted to have. However, in extrapolating the economic returns and subsequent satisfaction

[20] Fig 6.2 refers to position in Slowey 2012. Number below caption refers to position within this thesis.

levels enjoyed by graduates (dependent on age, gender and social class), it was found that many graduates are not happy with these returns, some regretting having gone to college at all (Fleming et al., 2009, Staunton 2008*).* Staunton (2008) noted that many mature graduates (50+) were only able to gain employment in jobs that would not be classified as requiring a degree, or in the voluntary sectors. Such was the extent of frustration in this cohort that some expressed regret at having ever embarked on the journey. Those in the 24-39 age category who were single and childless were noted as most likely to be happy with their occupational outcomes. This study has shown that, irrespective of gender, full time employment diminished as age increased, 90% of the graduates under 40 years of age were employed full-time, compared to only 63% between 40 and 55 years and as few as 32% for those aged 55 and upwards. 26% of the older groups were earning less than E20, 000 p.a. compared to 19% of the younger cohorts, females over the age of forty faring the worst in terms of current pay and potential salary increases (ibid).

Egerton (2000), Purcell et al., (2007) suggest that certain professions are thought of as a "young man's game" where thirty would be considered too old for successful engagement. Overall, financial returns and employment opportunities tend to lessen with advancing years (Staunton, 2008; Woodley & Wilson, 2002; Ryan, 2004; Fleming et al., 2009; TAP, 2010) and gender disparities are evident in recompense and in work classification (Staunton, 2008; Egerton, 2000; Adnett & Coates, 2000; Woodfield, 2007). Mature individuals, particularly women, were more likely to be situated in the public sector (Egerton, 2000; Staunton, 2008; Ryan, 2004) possibly due to work releases for education and/or flexibility regarding family responsibilities.

Despite the lack of economic prosperity accompanying degree status for many mature graduates (particularly those who are in the older age brackets) many cite personal growth and 'giving back' to their communities as being the most valued returns of a third level education. For instance of the 70% who had pursued a B.A. degree, only 52% had increased their income to some extent, but most felt that their education had benefited the grassroots of society (Fleming et al., 2009). In this sense, the value of third level, or indeed lifelong learning, being repeatedly emphasised at Global and European levels for its economic functionalism is to an extent redundant. However, its value with respect to personal agency, social engagement and cultural change is perhaps less easily measurable but undoubtedly significant and will be explored as part of this study.

Strong arguments are made suggesting that higher education and indeed the labour market continues to embody a world order that prizes patriarchal value systems which favour knowledge and mores of the public realm over that of the private realm (Preece, 2009; Gouthro, 2009; Fenwick, 2004; Erwin & Steward, 1997; Woofield, 2007). Perrons (2009) suggests that occupations are placed on a hierarchy where those associated with caring (for instance teaching or social work) are less valued. Caring is deemed a female attribute and a natural talent rather than a skill which is value added. This natural talent element seems to supersede any of the skills that would have been acquired through education for these occupations, and negatively impacts on rates of pay. Woodfield's (2007) suggests that the parameters of success are too narrow, being defined mainly in terms of a full time graduate appropriate job. Re-analysing

employment data to include full, temporary and self employed occupations, she concludes that mature graduates are not disadvantaged in the work force. Indeed older mature female graduates may be deemed to be the most advantaged in terms of employment as they are most often found working in part-time jobs. Changing the discourse on employment in this manner would find resonance in Gouthro's (2009) approach to a perspective change in the valuing of different elements of society. However, the study summary masks trends noted in the analysis, such as part-time work increasing steadily and full time work decreasing steadily only as age increases. Woodfield (2007) suggestion is that this is through choice; however it is equally arguable that it is through lack of choice, resultant from societal constraint (Hopper, 1981 Hopper & Osbourn, 1975; Fleming et al., 2009).

Marks (1999) suggests that the holistic value of a degree may yield more benefit in that there might be intrinsic more than extrinsic value. The intrinsic value of third level has been noted by other authors; Fleming et al., (2009) Staunton (2008), Jenkins (2006), Purcell et al.,(2007), Share & Carroll (2013) and is regarded as significant to the well being of the individual, often causing a ripple effect in family and community by encouraging other non traditional students to engage in third level education. Those (particularly those who are parents) that are the first generation of third level students, are embodiments of "college knowledge" and can act as role models within their families (Share et al., 2013; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010). Many feel that their acquired system knowledge, in addition to their subject knowledge, is of great benefit to their children in planning their educational journeys. This is an important point, as the system and experiential knowledge of those from middle class backgrounds, as

well as their ability to fund extracurricular activities and source additional schooling if required, has often been offered as reason for the continuation of middle class dominance (Reay, 1998; Lynch, 1999; O'Connell et al., 2006; Laureau, 2000). The "ripple effect" as described by Share et al., (2013) sees the first generation student acting as a bridge between two different milieus, thus offering the possibility of two way traffic, acting as ambassadors to a social milieu where a third level education may not be considered normative, and also bringing working class culture into the academy. Although for some, having a foot in two worlds has been seen as problematical (Reay et al., 2002; Jetten et al., 2008). However, Keane (2011) noted an alternative to straggling both worlds in observing a tendency towards "closing behaviours" whereby students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tended to socialise within their own SEG either as a defence mechanism against identity transformation or a distraction from the task in hand (that being achieving a degree), or through lack of awareness of the need for a good social network in exploiting the potential of the degree in the workforce. This, according to Keane (2011), placed them at a considerable disadvantage in the workforce as they lacked the social network to convert their high level of educational capital (being recipients of degrees) into economic capital. As noted by Brennan (2002) and Hansen (2001) middle class graduates' use of social networks can result in them getting better than average jobs in their professional sphere, and consequently those from lower SEGs can find themselves getting average or worse than average jobs.

Nevertheless, as noted by Greenwald (2012) a working class culture is not merely something to be studied but something to be lived, not something to be cast off when

engaging in college education and as such needs to have a place in the academy. "First generation students not only cross the class border but can translate cultures, too" Greenwald (2012:1). This is of significance in attempting to inform a broader appreciation of Higher Education beyond its service to the labour market, and in broadening the debate as to the nature of education.

Alternative admission procedures have facilitated mature entry into the academy, however, having gained entry the mature student may be beset by challenges that may not test the traditional undergraduate in the same manner. Of note is lack of knowledge and guidance regarding the system process, of not having the academic skills to produce college appropriate work in the initial stages of their college careers (Gallagher et al., 1993; Jones, 2006; Lehmann, 2007) being visibly different, specifically in terms of having different accents which, it is felt, is often regarded negatively (Reay, Ball & David, 2002; McNeill, 2009). The demands of a private life separate from that of the university, in terms of juggling responsibilities such as childcare provision, maintaining relationships, having enough money to pay bills, can result in tensions and stress for the mature adult who is negotiating the role and responsibilities of student (Gouthro 2009; Moran 2012; Keane 2009). Often, culture and education join economic effects as significant barriers in progression to, through and from third level institutions (Bowl, 2005; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1996; Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2010). However a study by Reay, Crozier, Clayton (2009), echoed the findings of Hopper (1981) in noting that working class and/or mature students attending elite universities did not experience the levels of unease and lack of belonging, (both within the academy and in the home sphere) that are usually noted in research (Reay, 1998,

2002; Sari, 2008; Jetten, Iyer & Young, 2008). Reay et al.'s., (2009) explanation of this is similar to Hopper's(1981) in that whilst the students may have felt they lacked the cultural and economic capital within their family and schooling, that would be expected in an elite institution, they had a strong sense of self and worked reflexively to develop this. Of note, was mention by some of the participants in the study, of having (even minimal) support by an agent, such as a teacher, in their endeavours. This is significant as it highlights not merely the importance of individual intent, but also the impact of agents on behaviour and intent, in contribution to the developmental process.

The experiences of mature students that form the content of the studies referred to in the previous paragraphs have been researched through the lens of various theoretical paradigms. Social mobility paradigms, for instance, could offer explanation for the above mentioned experiences, in terms of belonging and being socialised (or indeed not being socialised) into particular milieu (Bourdieu et al., 1990: Hopper, 1981; Hopper et al., 1975). However, the usefulness of the approach taken for this thesis is in going beyond this explanation, particularly in research that engages in dialogue with individuals who have lived through the particular experiences, in this instance, third level attendance at an elite institution. This thesis is examining the lived experience of third level attendance by mature graduates, of different ages and different social class backgrounds. It will offer a critique of the convergence and divergence of cultural milieu that goes beyond the notion of dominant culture, a term which could be regarded as pejorative in the implication that other cultural mores now positioned within the academy, are subordinate or deficient (Morley, 2003; Jones, 2012; Brown

2013). Social mobility is most often interpreted as hierarchal upward mobility through the social classes. Such interpretations do not fully explain the experiences such as Reay et al., (2009) described earlier, where education was a valued goal in itself, not necessarily as a conduit to another social class. Neither do they adequately account for those who choose to occupy and master a novel space, whilst retaining rather than retraining the self. The charge that focus on the individual, his/her motivations, aims and experiences, signal acceptance of the status quo of structural injustice, can be robustly challenged. In the main, the avenue open to the majority of individuals to effect change with respect to lifelong learning is to avail of what has been facilitated within State structures. It is only by exploring the individual intent, journey and outcome, that fresh insight can be brought to the discourses surrounding culture, development, lifelong learning and that current ideological positions can be challenged.

It is suggested, then, that the concept of social mobility is still relevant, but should be nuanced to interpret any type of mobility including horizontal. In this manner social mobility is akin to physical mobility in that it is not movement of the individual "up through the ranks" but movement "along routes of particular interest." Given the changing status attached to occupations, the changing nature of employment and the need to reflect the public and private sphere, movement along routes will generate useful data in understanding cultural convergences and divergences and the effect this has on the life worlds of individuals. This approach will be useful in contributing to the knowledge base with respect to mature individuals and their value systems, their motivations, experiences and outcomes with regard to participating in Higher

Education. In turn, this knowledge will be constructive both in broadening the academic debate on education and in gauging the efficacy of current policy. In seeking to explore how mature individuals negotiate their engagement with Higher Education at a non-normative stage in their life trajectories, this research is guided by the following questions:

1) What are the triggers or events that cause people to decide to go to college as mature students?
2) What are their assumptions?
3) How did they relate to academic staff and traditional students within the college?
4) What (if any) support systems did they value within the home and within the college?
5) How did the process of going to college and emerging as a degree holder affect employment, personal outcome and social opportunities?
6) Has a third level education changed their ways of thinking, their behaviours or their routine habits?

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter opened with a précis of the historical development of the HE sector and then presented the focus of this analysis (a case study of mature students who have

attended TCD between the years 1995-2005) and given an outline of the development of the concept in education of lifelong learning from a supranational and national perspective. Casting a lens on agendas and recommendations of bodies such as OECD and UNESCO, and on recommendations and policy development within the National arena, has highlighted the growth in influence of neo-liberal ideologies in the development of the lifelong learning agenda. This has been debated in the context of widening participation agendas, in terms of tensions surrounding whether inclusion policies serve to redress or continue to perpetuate social inequality; whether the welding of education to the labour market, (with a focus on acquiring credentials), has resulted in the creation of a more highly educated and skilled workforce or whether "the goalposts are changed" by elite sectors of society who find ways to ring-fence opportunity thus rending previously adequate degree status now inadequate for particular functions. The conclusion at this stage of the debate is that there is ample support in literature to suggest that a focus on neoliberalism can be seen as either as a tool of oppression or a tool of empowerment. However, such a focus does not leave room to address the nature of education beyond its function in servicing the labour market nor does it allow contemplation on the contribution of the student to the educational arena in addition to what they gain from it.

In the next section of the chapter, attention has been paid to the experiences of mature individuals who have engaged in third level education. As a starting point, research probing the efficacy of inclusion policies has been discussed, and quotas of inclusion reviewed. Overall, research suggests that polices that aim to increase engagement with education through all age groups and to broaden the social mix

attending third level education have had mixed success. However, the argument was introduced that this reality is complex, that culture and status is not merely a collective property of any particular social class but resides within the individual who may well be a repository of various resources and identities. This is an important point to note and serves to inform on the heterogeneous nature of mature studentship.

The experiences of mature students were then discussed in terms of their engagement with the academy. In terms of expectations, many mature students had hoped to enhance their career opportunities, however research suggests that results were mixed with older students less likely to gain employment, recompense or benefits commensurate with their degree level.

The notion of social backgrounds is a prominent feature in many research studies in terms of access to university, experiences within and beyond the academy. The arguments in this area are centred on the extent to which social justice is delivered and experienced. There is ample evidence to suggest that this is not the case. However, there is also evidence presented of alternative viewpoints which suggest that viewing mature studentship through deficits in experience does not facilitate alternative viewpoints, such as being content with the self as is, as part of the student body in general, or judging success in the labour force as other than a full time middle-class job.

Finally, there are many theoretical prepositions that serve to explain the phenomena of mature students. Thus far this chapter has considered the development of lifelong

learning and the experiences of mature students within and beyond the academy. This chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the logic of employing social mobility as a useful conceptual framework in guiding the development of this research, in terms of the focus of policy development on enhancing employability and also in terms of understanding the extent to which an individual is socialised or not socialised within a particular milieu.

3 Chapter Three- Conceptualising Mature Students and Social Mobility

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I introduced the concept of social mobility and the reasons why I considered it useful in framing the development of the research to best answer the research questions. However, this decision was not made with the view that this is the only conceptual viewpoint by which to investigate this subject matter, there are many paradigms within the disciplines of education, sociology, psychology and economics that can credibly examine and offer explanation for the phenomena of mature studentship. Neither do I believe from the tenets of social mobility theory (or from its use in analysis of the data pertaining to this thesis) that in and of itself it offers the fullest explanation of mature studentship particularly with respect to employing a life history approach. Rather it serves as Merton (1968) suggests as a mid range theory, which can be:

> Consolidated into wider networks of theory [and] ... includes the specification of ignorance. Rather than pretend to knowledge ... it expressly recognises what must still be learned in order to lay the foundation for still more knowledge (Merton, 1968:68).

The purpose in this chapter is to offer explanation of the particular theories that influenced me in considering the individual and the individual's place in his social context in the intimate and wider social sphere, leading up to his decision to engage in

education, his experiences within the academy and beyond. These theoretical constructs include: developmental theory and its interaction with education, socialisation and group membership, critical/fortuitous events, and attitude formation. In a sense each of these constructs formed the rungs in a stepladder that led the individual into mature studentship and led me into framing the research within Hopper's (1981) conception of social mobility. Therefore this chapter is presented in two parts, part (I) will illuminate the constructs as detailed above and section two will explicate social mobility and Hopper's concept of social mobility.

To begin, there is acknowledgement of the fact that human infants are born helpless and only survive due to the physical, emotional and cognitive care given by others. These others, usually parents, guide the individual to adulthood. The individual develops with the passing of time to become more physically, emotionally and cognitively independent, undertaking more adult duties, habits and responsibilities, usually on a phased basis. This approach has been described as stage development theory. An alternative theoretical approach, that of life span development, offers another interpretation of development, which sees the individual developing throughout life through dynamic engagement with the environment. To illuminate the differences a discussion of both approaches opens this chapter. Moving on from the concentration on the individual, the chapter then considers the socialisation experience in terms of the human need to affiliate and the tensions that may arise in terms of group culture, in addition to the factors that come into play as individuals seek to remain within groups and cross boundaries into other groups. However, knowledge of individual and group behaviour cannot explain what prompts the need

within an individual to seek change from a particular life-trajectory. In attempting to get to the core of the need for change, this chapter proceeds to explore the importance of fortuitous events and attitude formation in pivoting the individual towards change, whilst paying cognisance to the structural forces within which change potential is nested. Then this chapter moves on to consider the position of a number of dominant theorists in relation to social mobility, and the concept of social mobility as related to education.

3.2 Part I- Human development and education

> There is a growing awareness of the limitations of the traditional 'front end education' and learning model. With its 'life phase approach it imposes fairly rigid compartmentalising of learning and working life, and ignores the mutually reinforcing states of being and becoming that characterise, or should characterise human existence (Pan, 1997:35).

The précis of European and National policies offered in the previous chapter is a reflection of the extent to which the lifelong learning process is now embedded in the education arena. Previously, the front end approach to education, as described above, adopted a life phase approach, focusing on the early stages of human development. This approach owes much to the stage theory approach to psychological development being highly dynamic in the first two to three decades of life and levelling off thereafter (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Examples of stage theories

include those of Piaget (1974), and of Erikson (1963). Piaget (1974) saw a change in the cognitive processes, with a child moving from concrete (approximately from 7-11 years of age) where they thought in a practical manner about objects with which they were familiar to abstract processing, where cognitive processes had matured to incorporate hypothetical thinking. Erikson (1963) developed a stage theory that drew attention to the importance of having positive early experiences on the development of the individual and his ability to act independently in adulthood. Stage theories were particularly useful in facilitating a particular cultural and economic process/paradigm that saw a labour market as a more or less fixed forty year trajectory, based on the frontloaded educational attainment. In order to maximise a particular career path, or rung in an occupational ladder, the amount of education and the route of education was of importance. Those leaving school early could be deemed to be minimising options in terms of potential career choice, pay and benefits (Hopper, 1981; Jones, 2012).

The life span approach to development suggests that development does not plateau out in the early adulthood but rather that it is malleable and extends throughout the whole life span (Baltes, Reese & Lipsitt, 1980; Baltes, 2005; Staudinger & Lindenberger, 2003). This pays cognisance to how the past and present experiences, and future hopes, impact on development through the lifespan, and the plasticity of the individual in responding to environmental opportunities and difficulties. Context and history are important in adapting to challenges within the life span. As development is taken then to occur throughout the entire life course, lifetime adaptive processes are required.

Baltes et al. (1980) propose a model incorporating three factors, normative age-graded influences, normative history graded influences and non-normative life events. The normative age-graded influences are those environmental and biological influences that are experienced by people of a similar age group, for instance time spent with a similar cohort in primary and secondary education. Hopper (1981) refers to this as life-cycle development in that individuals are engaging in a more or less accepted rite of passage with particular roles being played out sequentially at particular stages. Normative history graded influences are the biological and environmental influences that are associated with particular generations, for example, the Celtic Tiger and the subsequent Recession would be particularly pertinent to Irish people growing up in the 1990s/2000s World War Two for generations who lived through the 1940s. Non-normative life events consist of the unexpected, those unusual occurrences that have a profound influence on an individual. These, unlike the two previous factors, are personal in nature, for instance, the experience of a personal tragedy will have a residual effect that could manifest itself throughout the remainder of an individual's life. Hopper (1981) discusses non normative life events in terms of events that cause a shift in the parallel sequencing of the life-cycle and life-trajectory. Life-trajectory refers to the structured pathway that one follows in living out the lifecycle. A rough rule of thumb being that life-trajectory is defined socially and culturally and the life-cycle defined physiologically and psychologically. Schuller (1992) offers useful commentary on lifespan development and lifelong learning, combining reference to both psychological and sociological factors. Schuller highlights the fact that a focus on chronological age or on the socially constructed life-cycle, assumes a sequence of events that may not happen in that particular order: "not all

individuals pass through the same set of stages, moreover they may loop back, blurring the boundaries and confounding the sequences" (Schuller in Fingerman, Berg, Smith, Antonucci, 2011:19). The lifespan approach to development, then, is useful to consider with respect to this thesis as it offers explanation of the adult's ability to re-engage with education beyond the "normative" age expected in a front loaded system.

3.3 Socialisation and Group Membership

However, although the occurrence of adults re-engaging in education has become part of the broad education landscape, it still represents a very small proportion of the student population (Fleming et al., 2009). This presents a challenge to the process of socialisation: "interpersonal transactions as people are exposed to and adopt ways of understanding and acting that reflect the norms of their social groups." (Bornstein, Mortimer, Lutfey & Bradley, 2011:27). This can represent a tension for the mature student in that they do not share the same context and content of life as their younger contemporaries (notwithstanding heterogeneity within the younger traditional aged student cohort) simply because they have lived longer and had a variety of life experiences that have shaped their own socialisation. Coming into education, therefore is a re-socialising experience (accommodated with varying levels of ease/difficulty depending on the individual), whereby the adult has to reconcile his own social identity with that of student. The culture of group behaviour may differ in that the norms, conventions, behaviour and expectations of the traditional student group may differ to that of the adult, possibly leading to tensions in the socialisation

process. Quinn & Holland in Fingerman et al., (2011:32), note that socialisation is enmeshed by:

> Every class, culture, and time is characterized, and distinguished from others by thoroughgoing, deep seated, and consistent themes that specify what one needs to know, to think, to feel and to behave as a functioning member of society as moderated by the class, culture, or time.

The engagement of adults in education offers a challenge to the above definition of socialisation in that the adult student could be regarded as looping back and confounding the sequences as described by Schuller on the previous page, and also in the prescriptive description of social class, culture and time. Change often occurs as a result of agitation in an education movement, for example (as detailed in chapter two of the thesis), the growth of adult education movements. This would be evidenced by group strategising that has sought to effect social change involving collective defence of alternatives and rejection of a position or positions that placed group members in a subordinate position, in addition to a change in the social belief system whereby low status groups seek to change collectively and improve the position of the group as a whole. Social change and social change belief systems are collective responses to a feeling of inherent injustice or illegitimacy in the social system (Haslam, 2004). However an alternative to the collective response is the individual response, whereby a member of a group believes that aspects of the social system are unjust and seeks self enhancement for one's self and not as part of a group. In this instance the status

quo is accepted and the individual sets about trying to improve their own personal position. Such behaviour is described as a social mobility belief system (Haslan & Reicher, 2002).

Humans have a need to affiliate, a need which is served by belonging to a group (Baumiester & Leary, 1995). This provides the individual with a social identity, that part of their self concept derived from their knowledge of being a member of that group and the value that they attach to such membership (Tajfel, 2010). Being a member of a group can be a source of power in terms of providing support and confidence to group members (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). It allows an individual the opportunity not to rely on the self and the personal identity wholly, by offering the opportunity to belong, to be the "us" part of a "them and us" scenario. Being a member of a group does not necessarily mean losing the self; rather it is about changing aspects of self definition and thus changing aspects associated with norms, values and beliefs which guide behaviour (Turner et al., 1987). The social cohesion model builds on this explanation by describing the affective basis of group membership where individuals are attracted to groups based on either direct or indirect rewards of membership (Lott & Lott, 1965). This model, however, has attracted criticism in that social cohesion is not always necessary for group formation. Social identification models differ from social cohesion models, and to an extent, explain group membership where cohesion is not a factor. Social identity theory suggests that there is a cognitive or perceptual element to group belonging. People think about being a member of a group in terms of their opinion of the group, their place in the group and the usefulness of the group to them, in addition to whether or

not they like the other group members (Turner, 2010). Yet both these models imply some form of deliberation in group membership, which doesn't account for the groups one is destined to join merely by "being." This is addressed in Hopper's conception of group membership. Hopper (1981) draws a distinction between consciousness of group membership and awareness. This is an important distinction, as an individual is a member of a group, indeed many groups from birth onwards, not by choice, affect or cognitive decision making, but by simple happenstance. From Hopper's perspective an individual may be aware that he is in a certain family or a particular social class, for instance, but unless there is a consciousness of the grouping or "community value" of belonging to that group, then it is useful only in a utilitarian sense. If there is a consciousness of belonging to that group then it has a community value with recognition of dis/advantage of group membership. However, there are times when being a member of a group may represent a dissonance between aspects of an individual's beliefs and values and that of the group. Reicher (1996) suggests this scenario is evidenced by social change; people may conform but may also challenge, particularly if they are unhappy about their personal experience or their group position in the status quo. Their ability to change is affected both by their innate self and by the status rigidity of the society in which they live. Caddick (2010) suggests that an individual may seek change in the status quo that they may have previously been content with as a result of: " the rejection of the existing social reality as the only possible objective state of affairs, and consequently the development of cognitive alternatives to the present situation" (Caddick in Tajfel 2010:6). Hopper (1981) further refines the notion of dissatisfaction growing from group membership with reference to the growth of insatiability:

> Insatiability was not conceived as a person's desire for an unobtainable object to a point at which the achievement of any other object could never give satisfaction. Seen sociologically, insatiability was a manifestation of the inability to assess one's own achievements in comparison with those of others, primarily because one lacked personal boundaries and limits (Hopper, 1981:4).

Having discussed individual participation in groups, and theorised as to the reasons an individual may cease to be satisfied with particular group membership, attention now turns to those factors that prevent or facilitate movement between groups. Three critical factors affect movement through groups: boundary permeability, legitimacy and unspoken or assumed boundaries of the group: for instance being female and assuming that gender will not prevent progress on the occupational ladder, or being of opposite gender in an historically gendered occupation (for example, being a female electrician or being a male midwife). Legitimacy refers to whether the group's position, indeed the existence of inequality between groups can be justified. Cognitive alternatives refer to the ability of the group to imagine other ways of organising the social world (Haslan & Reicher, 2002). If no other alternatives can be imagined or desired, then group relations can be said to be secure, however if inequalities are regarded as unjust and therefore illegitimate and alternatives can be imagined then group relations can be said to be insecure (ibid). For instance the dominance of certain social class backgrounds in the constituency of university student populations was deemed unjust and eventually formed one of the strands leading to various social

policies being constructed and implemented attempting to bring about a more diverse student mix.

Social structures lay the boundaries of behaviour, these structures have to be accepted (most likely subliminally) by the individual and this is achieved by their interactions with friends and family and the cultural patterns embedded in their daily lives. So it follows that if "personality and character have a social basis" and the opposite also has to be true, that society has to have a personal basis "in terms of the mediating actions of persons who have emerged from the social organism" (Hopper 1981:5). Therefore in studying social mobility it is necessary to understand how the psyche is structured by society and culture, why discontent exists, discontent being a function of not having what is wanted as much as wanting more than one has, how insatiability is identified, how or whether it is associated with rewards of a stratified social system and how that is manifested.

Group membership is an active and dynamic aspect of an individual's interaction with the social world throughout his lifecycle. Hopper (1981) argues that groups exist on a spectrum between normative and comparative[21], whilst acknowledging that within each domain, there is the potential for many subgroups and changing groups over the lifecycle. An individual may take his frame of reference from one of his normative

[21] Normative reference groups are those from which an individual absorbs norms as to how he feels, how he behaves and the types of goals he may aspire to achieve, comparative reference groups are those which an individual compares himself to in order to evaluate his success in pursuing and achieving particular goals. The groups may or may not be congruent. (Hopper, 1981)

group, for instance his social class his "field", (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990)[22] and from this perspective will evaluate and set goals. It is possible however that there are other goals set which are not symbolic within this normative reference group (also known as membership group) but rather within the group he compares himself with (comparative reference group). Expounding on this, Hopper (1981) uses the example of an individual who regards himself as working class but has lower middle class values[23].

In this example the normative reference group and the comparative reference group are different but there are occasions when both groups are the same[24]. An individual forms achievement orientations within a membership group but evaluates his achievements with respect to the achievements of members of a comparative reference group.

However, an individual may belong to many different types of groups. An individual's reference groups consist not only of his membership groups (those to which he belongs, ranging from family, class groups, occupational and hobby groups and so

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[22] Field, habitus and cultural capital are core concepts of Bourdieu's social theory. Field is the structure of social relations within which the individual is embedded, habitus refers to the individual's own way of interacting with the field and cultural capital refers to the cultural tastes and behaviours that an individual possesses, inured due to membership of particular levels of social strata (Harrington, 2005).

[23] Hout (2008) found that most Americans regard themselves as middle class (their own subjective appraisal) regardless of their actual social class position (their objective social class position) which is defined in terms of his life chances as defined by occupation.

[24] Hansen (2001) with respect to law students, Hansen noted that those coming from law families (normative groups) had more success in their careers (comparative groups) than those coming from non-law families (normative group being different from comparative group). This was particularly interesting as law can only be practised in Norway upon completion of degree from a public university.

forth) but also those to which he compares himself when setting and accessing goals. In this thesis I am interested in understanding the significance of group membership and more particularly the impact (if any) of visible signs of membership of such groups, (for instance the visible sign of age or of accents) on the sense of belonging as experienced within the academy and also of exploring the element of choice in terms of participation of individual actors in groups. It could be added to this proviso the importance of outgroup members in other strata who would need to legitimise the mobility also. For example, if education is regarded as a vehicle of social mobility, the mature student should be on par with traditional students in terms of treatment of them and expectation from them. They would need to be accepted by the student body as a legitimate member of same, and feel comfortable within the academic and social sphere of the university, notwithstanding that every individual's interactions with their milieu is influenced by their own personality, regardless of age.

Allport, (1954); Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, (1988); Al Ramiah & Hewstone, (2013) noted that contact between groups helped to reduce prejudice and increase cooperation. Four key factors (Allport, 1954) were deemed necessary: equal status, common goals, institutional and social support and intergroup cooperation. Equal status and common goals are a feature of the academy in the sense that social policy has determined equal status in terms of acceptance into an academic programme, and all such students share at least one common goal, that of pursuit of a degree. This thesis contributes to the evidence base regarding the institutional and social support and intergroup cooperation by exploring the notion of group contact beyond that of mature-traditional group. The focus of inquiry on these factors is not to offer more

evidence on the use of contact in reducing prejudice, as this is now well established (Fiske, 2010; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hewstone & Swart, 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014) but to explore group membership from an individual perspective, taking into account the exercise of choice. To this end a matrix of possible groups has been devised and the extent of contact between the mature individuals and these groups is explored.

3.4 Critical/Fortuitous Events, Socialisation and Attitude Formation

> Although the separate chains of events in a chance encounter have their own causal determinants, their intersection occurs fortuitously rather than through deliberate plan. (Bandura, 1982:749)

Social policy has facilitated entry into third level for mature individuals, and thus is a particular measure that has brought the concept of lifelong education into the public arena. However, for the individual to engage in education, most often involves deviating from a particular life-trajectory. Such a deviation needs to be preceded by an event which has the effect of the individual taking stock of life and arriving at the decision to pursue education. This speaks to the agency of the individual who, whilst enmeshed in a social structure, is "able to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and ... shape their life circumstances and the courses their lives take" (Bandura 2006:1). Chance therefore, plays an important part in shaping individual lives (Bandura, 1982; Becker, 1993; McDonald, 2009).

A fortuitous event is one which is unconnected to the individual but occurs as a unique event or influence which has the ability to alter the course of life (Bandura, 2006). These may be very simple events, for instance, a chance meeting, but are of sufficient importance to that individual to take a change and deviate from their particular life-trajectory. Although the human has agency, he still exists within a social system. 'The self must be socially constructed through transactional experiences with the environment' (Bandura, 2006:3).

Hopper (1981) refers to these fortuitous events as bridging factors and regards them as necessary precursors to effecting change in one's life-trajectory. Hopper noted that often people talked of being lucky or having a lucky chance encounter. However he suggested that this was most likely due to the individuals having the personal traits that would allow them to capitalise on opportunities as they would occur. Schwalbe (2001) and McDonald (2009) draw attention to the fact that even fortuitous events occur within structures bounded by social factors. Hence even a chance meeting has social and personal determinants in that the individuals meet in the social sphere, exchange information based on life experience, and that life experience has been facilitated by social structures. Examples other than chance encounters which have led to people deviating from particular life trajectories that have been noted in Hopper (1981) and Hopper et al's., (1975) work included participation in voluntary groups or leisure activities or on occasion work or trade unions. These, on occasion, have facilitated re- entry into education. Of note in considering bridging factors, is that they formed part of the process of re-engaging in education, the individual needed to be

prepared to take the chance to change and structural factors had to be such that the change could be facilitated. This thesis adopts a life history approach to exploring the mature students' engagement with education. Capturing those critical/fortuitous events that caused mature individuals to deviate from their particular life trajectories will add to the body of knowledge concerning the extent to which change is due to, (or facilitated by) personal agency or social structure. Seeking to identity those pivotal events which were influential in causing an individual to deviate from a particular life-trajectory facilitates reflection on the intersection of the individual with education in any guise and the possibility of exploring the extent to which exposure to education may have contributed to the individual being "primed" to engage in education.

At this juncture, having discussed the role of fortuitous events in changing life trajectories, it is pertinent to refocus attention on the question prompting the instigation of this thesis, namely: why choose education to effect change in one's life? The very first step in choosing education must be preceded by having a favourable attitude towards it (Zajonc, 2001). "Mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it" (Zajonc, 1968:1). This finding has been replicated in several studies. (Bornstein, 1989; Hoffman, 1986; Janiszewski, 1993; Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick & Finkel, 2011; Monahan, Murphy, & Zajonc, 2000). Broadly, the premise for this finding rests on the notion that, even subliminally, greater exposure to an item or an individual increases familiarity, which in turn causes people to have more positive attitudes towards the item or individual. This occurs with either intentional or incidental exposure to stimulus (Janiszewski, 1993) and is strongest when the individual has either a positive

or neutral attitude to the stimulus. There are three dominant processes contributing to the exposure-familiarity effect: perceived responsiveness, increased comfort and satisfaction and perceived knowledge (Reis et al., 2011). In Reis et al's., (2011) study they refined the notion of neutrality to one of ambiguity in respect of individuals, such that in the absence of information to the contrary, individuals are predisposed to like each other, as they assume the other to be similar to the self. The robustness of the mere exposure effect has been supported in several studies with diverse stimuli as evidenced in Bornstein's meta- analysis (1989). However there are occasions when familiarity has bred dislike or contempt (Ebbesen, Kjos & Konecni, 1976; Norton, Frost & Ariely, 2007; Crisp, Hutter & Young 2009). This has been evident when exposure has occurred in threatening conditions, repeated exposure will make the threat more salient (Crisp et al., 2009), and initially negative attitudes can become more negative with repeated exposure (Crisp, Heuston, Farr & Turner, 2007) and in the case of prolonged exposure when a particular boredom threshold is reached (Bornstein, Kale & Cornell, 1990).

The concept of mere exposure inducing liking can contribute to an understanding of a regard for education that may have been latent in the individual and may have its roots in habits and exposures experienced (even subliminally) by the individual long before they considered undertaking third level education. For instance, in the early years, was the individual exposed to the habit of reading, even if not encouraged or supported in the school system? In this instance, (even if having a chequered or aborted school career) the individual may have had a positive (or at a minimum-neutral) attitude towards acquiring knowledge and been responsive to the possibility

of further education. Moving on to later stage, the notion of mere exposure is useful in reflecting on the interaction between the mature individual and groups within the academy, in terms of increasing liking between groups as a result of increased comfort and familiarity across different age groups and social backgrounds. It could also offer explanation in the context of a mature individual liking their subject matter but disliking individuals and groups within college. In this instance fondness for the subject matter could have grown from a neutral or positive relationship with the stimulus (education) whereas they may have come into college with a negative preconception of the groups within and feel that their personal identity is threatened by the group identity within the college, thus increasing their negativity towards the college population identified as "other".

Hopper's (1981) concept of social mobility offers explanation of how the mature individual may set goals with reference to normative or comparative reference groups. Nevertheless, both these constructs (critical/fortuitous events and mere exposure effect) serve to enhance this aspect of Hopper's conceptual theory and are useful in garnering (within the life history approach) the genesis of an individual's relationship with education, in terms of how they may have been primed through their previous life experiences to engage with education as an adult and their readiness to act on the critical/fortuitous event when it presented itself within their social sphere.

3.5 Pushing for change-relationship between education and social mobility

This thesis is situated within the education milieu. The Irish education system, in common with others that fall within the broad European cultural tradition, focuses on compulsory schooling in the early decades of an individual's life. By the end of formal schooling (usually a secondary level/tier coinciding with the teenage years) adolescents are possessors of types of knowledge upon which their future academic and/or occupational progression will based. As such, concentration of education in these early decades, the frontloading of specific knowledge within the lifespan, facilitates the categorisations and stratifications which operate within society. Hopper (1981) regarded education as an instrument in society's toolbox that could be put to use in terms of career, status and mobility training, with different routes of education, influencing amounts of education, thus setting people up for particular occupations and strata positions. Therefore, in common with other theorists (Ingram, 2009; Reay, 2012; Simister, 2011; Healy, Reynolds & Collins, 2006; Hansen, 2001; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Bowles, 1976), Hopper saw the role of education, within the socialisation process as both a selective filter and a selective distributor of cultural styles. Selection, from this perspective, is essential to the education process and the educational process is essential to the maintenance of culture. The career training that arises from education results in the formation of normative expectations and levels of achievement by setting up economic and occupational goals. Successful career training should result in the individual having the skills and knowledge required for those economic and occupational goals that were commensurate with his level of education. Status and mobility training refer to the transmission of diffuse skills and

qualities to individuals (ways of being and knowing) which enable entry to those status groups which s/he should expect admission to within a particular life world (ibid).

A tension surrounds the concept of social mobility both within disciplines and between. It moves beyond the consideration of personal movement within and beyond group boundaries. Psychologists for instance may be interested in the role personality plays in social processes. Economists might choose to focus on intergenerational income level differences whereas sociologists may focus on the distance between social class of origin and social destination. However the most parsimonious definition that could be offered to describe social mobility is a movement from one social class, or socio economic group to another. Within the Irish domain social class and socio economic group are two very similar classification systems, the former referring to occupations on a ranked basis and the latter referring to the additional skills or educational attainment required[25].

In terms of the range of difference in social mobility, people can move, up, down or remain static within the social strata. They may change job within the one social class classification, resulting in a change in situs (Hopper, 1981). Sitis is a factor that sometimes confounds the study of social mobility, in that an occupation may be class related, but the organisation in which the occupation is conducted may have a higher status than another organisation, even if the work being done is identical, for instance administration work in a university may be valued more highly than administration

[25] Precise definitions of social class and socio economic group from CSO appendix 2 given in chapter four.

work in a factory conglomerate. However status may not only be attached to the forum of the work, but also the benefits attached to that work and indeed aspects of the individual. Perfect mobility occurs when a child's adult social class does not depend on his/her parents' social class. Absolute mobility merely measures whether people are higher up or lower down on the social class hierarchy than their parents. (Breen, 2010). However, such explanations mask complexities inherent in the concept of social mobility. Breen (2010) offers the example of having a father who was a clerk and himself being a manager. In absolute terms he would be upwardly mobile, however in terms of the generational experience, the father (clerk) might have been in a better class position than half of the population, whereas in the present generation being a manager might mean that one is only in a better position than 40% of the population. Therefore in relative terms the manager is downwardly mobile as his father (clerk) had a position where 50% of his generation had a better class position whereas the manager has a job where 60% of his generation has a better class position. Consequently mobility is era dependent and contingent upon and relative to occupation structures. Intergenerational mobility is a characteristic of note whereby an individual is able to move between different social classes and occupations within his/her lifetime. This is a particularly noteworthy facet of mobility as it is occurring through the volition of an adult, who as a consequence simply of time, has most likely amassed group memberships, for instance family and special interest networks. Therefore the intention to deviate from a particular trajectory most likely violates some of the norms of some of the groups of which they are members, some of the boundaries of which may be more permeable than others, and the individual must possess some goal orientation and degree of intent to make the changes to their

everyday living (Hopper, 1981). Beck (1992) offers a late modernity perspective in that this present era is evidenced by a loss of faith in social institutions and social structures, leading the individual to either be creative in creating their own biographies or else steadfastly refusing to change. Giddens (1991) would regard the former as a reflexive project with the self at centre continuously revising the personal biographical narrative. Both these viewpoints, offer somewhat different explanations to that of Hopper (1981) in the individual's desire/lack of desire for change. Alternatively, the viewpoint of Bourdieu et al., (1977), as expounded upon earlier, is that perfect social mobility is not possible as the individual may acquire a higher status occupation, but will not have the ascribed cultural capital that would be necessary to gain all the rewards of that particular occupation.

3.6 Part II- Choosing a conceptual framework

As stated in the Introduction, this research was conceived to better understand the reasons why an individual chose to re-enter education, and to explore the relationship that they had with education throughout their lives, more so than to test a theory of social mobility. At this juncture, it is important to emphasise that choosing to use a concept of social mobility to aid in the design of the study, was not done to test the efficacy of any particular theory of social mobility but rather to pay cognisance to the social structure, enabled by social policies that has facilitated adult entry into degree level education, and to ascertain the extent to which it factored in the mindset and the experience of the individual.

The human capital paradigm driving the narrative of policy development in the education arena has been elucidated in chapter two. This paradigm offers explanation as to how education can facilitate "added value" to the individual in terms of the additional skills and knowledge that they can bring to the marketplace. However, this approach does not necessarily best address the "why" of individual endeavour or particularly "how" success is measured from the individual's perspective. For instance is it enough to suggest that increasing skills and knowledge will bring better reward? How is this reward represented? How is it measured? Social mobility paradigms offer alternative lenses though which to view engagement in education. Social mobility recognises that societies are structured and yet societies are fluid. It is the dynamic ability, existing and pertinent within society, that results in basic structures such as social class and status, being reproduced, being revalued or altered with diminishing, static or increasing values attributed, dependent on the elasticity of the society in question. Bertaux and Thompson (1997) posit that social mobility can be top down and/or bottom up driven. Groups of people may agitate for change depending on how they view the justness of their experiences at a particular hierarchy within the social sphere, or an individual may act similarly to effect personal change. Change from the top down may be facilitated by the loosening of boundaries surrounding, for example, education, employment and em/immigration. Social mobility exists because people are driven to want a better life (ibid) and it is suggested that it is this facet that explains the "why" of individual endeavour better perhaps than human capital paradigms. However the umbrella term "social mobility" encompasses a range of

theoretical approaches. These will now be explored with reference to dominant social theorists.

Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Merton[26] comment on society and the in/justice emanating from the structures of society. It is a sense of injustice, a lack of fairness that often drives individuals to seek to change their lot in society. Durkheim propagated a conservative scientific approach believing that society was changing in the late 1800s (in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war) from a focus on brotherhood and solidarity. Durkheim used the phrase "isolated individual" to describe a person who enters into exchange transactions that best benefit the self and maximise personal returns. Durkheim suggested in *Division of Labour* that the necessity for an encompassing moral consensus could not be a feature of modern society where divisions of labour had been established. In this instance social cohesion was achieved by organic solidarity, whereby society acknowledged these divisions and cohesion was based on relationships of exchange, which should not necessarily be interpreted as the pursuit of self interest but of co-operation. Organic solidarity therefore grows from difference between individuals rather than similarities, as people engage in exchange relationships to get something that they do not have, or to provide that which another does not possess. The root of this relationship of exchange and thus increasing structural differentiation lay in the rise of commercialism and

[26] Weber, Durkheim and Merton are regarded as functional theorists. According to Marx the function of state includes reproducing a system of class domination and exploitation. However, there is debate as to whether Marx can be described as a functionalist. For review of debate, refer to: Olin Wright, E. (1983) Is Marxism really functionalist, class reductionist and teleological? *American Journal of Sociology*,89.2.452-459. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779154

industrialisation in early modern Europe (Giddens, 1986). However, Durkheim also highlighted the negative effects of social mobility in the sense that it could negatively affect psychic balance in terms of creating anomie (ibid). Durkheim focused on what contributes to consensus in society, what constitutes normative expectation, and how expectations and deviations from social order are controlled and exercised (Hopper, 1981). However, whilst Durkheim can explain deviance and anomie in relation to social structure, he is somewhat less focused on exploring the underlying causes of conflict such as unequal access to power and resources.

Marx, however, cast a lens on the distribution of power within society and ownership of means of production, thus drawing attention to the perpetuation of what he deemed to be inherent injustice. Whilst Durkheim identified anomie as a feature that could be associated with individual social mobility (whereby the individual experiences a sense of loss and bewilderment due to not being aware of the new rules - often assumed and inherent – that guide the behaviour, expectations and sense of entitlement, of the new social group that they now are members of), Marx spoke of alienation in terms of workers losing control over their labour in terms that they have to sell their skills to employers, thus ceding a part of themselves to higher powers (employers in the capitalist system) who can manipulate these skills to best suit their own needs. Marx sought not to just understand society but to change it (Tovey & Share, 2003). In this sense Marxism is the antithesis of human capital theory. The latter sees the individual working on acquiring additional skills and knowledge to enhance his power in terms of his saleability to the labour market and thus maximise

his potential returns. The former sees such behaviour as a way of increasing alienation from the true self and increasing the yoke tying the individual to the capitalist system.

Weber accepted that both economic and status hierarchies exist in modern societies and with that comes occupational specialisation, differentiation and the potential for individuals to experience relative deprivation. Weber (1947) held that stratification could be viewed in three dimensions: economic class, social status and political power, and noted the difference in power and application of class (economic control) and social status (privilege). In distinguishing class from status, Weber positioned class within the economic market, characterised by acquisition of income and opportunity, while status was characterised by "patterns of consumption, lifestyle and habits of taste" (Morrison 1995:239). A key tenet of Weber's theory is a belief in rational action. In instrumental rational action the individual considers the end goal, the means and the opportunities available by which to attain this goal and weighs this against alternatives, and considers the effect of others on the likelihood of attainment of said goal(s). Thus Weber contended that while people accept that they live within a hierarchical structure, the more they believe that this is fair, the less likely they were to experience relative deprivation and seek change. However, such a state would be somewhat utopian, and therefore the use of instrumental adjustments and their structural determinants contributed to his explanation as to why people engaged in social mobility.

Merton (Lane & Ellis, 1968) contributes to the functionalist approach, and facilitates focus on individual desire more so than solidarity, in discussing anticipatory

socialisation whereby a person adopts the attitudes and values that he associates with the social class he wants to belong to. Lane et al., (1968) define Merton's three core aspects of anticipatory socialisation: prior value assimilation, affiliative motive and discontinuous status sequence. However, it is not clear in Merton's work, what it is that drives the anticipatory socialisation and causes the individual to place value on a particular reference group. Identifying such events is one of the tasks set in this thesis.

Feminists argue that these classical theorists assume patriarchal dominance in terms of structure and influence[27]. The head of household is most often assumed to be male, with women changing social class definition through marriage (Tovey et al., 2003). Durkheim regarded women as captive to their corporeality and defined as of their self in their own "here and now" whereas men rise above their corporeal state and are distinguished by their sociality (Harrington 2005). Weber noted the cultural domination of women, historically through kinship ties and socially through the continual power of patriarchy through which the domination of women continued as a characteristic of unchanging patterns of women's dependency on the supposed physically and intellectually stronger male. Despite the amount of women engaged in low paid work, or the support women working in the home gave to the working man- the proletariat- Marx held the view that women were dependent on the proletariat. Thus, similarly to Durkheim, Weber and to an extent Marx, assigned women to nature and men to culture (Harrington, 2005).

[27] Refer to section 2.5 for discussion on patriarchal value systems.

In terms of structure and agency, Archer (2007) coined the phrase 'morphogenetic' to refer to patterns generated by the repetition of social action. Society consists of both objective structures and individuals, which are separate but complementary constructs, as without people there would be no structures. People are both constrained and enabled by structure, culture derives from the activities of individuals but once embodied in an artefact contributes to structure and is viewed objectively. However actions are capable of producing both intended and unintended consequences and both impact on and have the capacity to transform structure, thus perpetuating a pattern of potential structural reproduction or transformation (Harrington,2005). Archer emphasises the role of reflexivity as a deliberative mediation that helps to explain patterns of social im/mobility. Human reflexivity is exercised by internal dialogue with the self which draws on our emotions, our intellect, our sensations and memories. Archer posits that reflexivity shapes how we make our way in the world, and our experiences of social mobility (Archer, 2007).

Bourdieu et al., (1977)[28] also sought to examine structure and agency reflexively (Harrington, 2005) suggesting that industrial societies employ education systems in such a way as to legitimate social class inequalities. This perspective sees particular types of cultural capital associated with particular social classes. Education systems require possession of cultural capital associated with higher social class habitus which in industrial and post-industrial societies forms the dominant culture. Therefore if educational success is built on the premise of familiarity with that cultural capital,

[28] Bourdieu's theory has been extended to explicate gender and race inequalities (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Dumas, 2002; Lareau & Hovat, 1999)

which is social class specific, then those not from that social class background, are at a considerable disadvantage, despite how meritocratic a society would appear to be. This results in those from higher social classes retaining dominance over the award of academic credentials and as consequence dominance in terms of jobs with high status in occupation hierarchies. If students from lower social class backgrounds manage to make it through the system, this is taken as evidence that meritocratic education systems are successful. Yet Bourdieu et al., (1977) contends that this will not result in similar rewards to that of contemporary students from a higher social class background as he/she will not have the "full bag" as it were of ascribed cultural capital that those other students would have had from birth onwards. Bernstein (1971) holds a similar perspective in suggesting that the function of education for the economy includes stratification for the purposes of an industrial society and the complexities of the division of labour, in addition to the manner in which culture is transmitted through education (curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation). These viewpoints argue for the use of education in a somewhat stultifying manner, however education has also been regarded as a "primary, valid vehicle for upward mobility" (Goldthorpe, Lleywellin & Payne 1980:232) and a tool of systemic correction by Hopper (1981).

I chose to use Hopper's concept of social mobility in framing this research as I considered his concept of social mobility paid cognisance both to the social structure and to personal attributes, and also highlighted the fundamental importance of insatiability. Hopper has developed a complex theory of social mobility, designed for use in mixed methods studies, primarily to test the association of levels of anxiety with scholastic endeavour and achievement orientations specifically within an adult

population. I would suggest that although it is undoubtedly useful to measure levels of anxiety in relation to goal striving, that such an approach could be said to pathologise the endeavour, and that the attributes of Hopper's core theory are valid in exploring social mobility and education from an alternative perspective, that of exploring some of the factors that come into play in goal orientation and achievement.

However, in common with other commentators and theorists (Bourdieu et al., 1977; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Bernstein, Turner, Zeigler, Smith Hasley, Davis, Archer & Vaughan in Hopper 1971; Ingram, 2009; Reay, 1998, 1999, 2002; Share & Carroll, 2013) Hopper is concerned with the manner in which education is both a vehicle of control and of opportunity within a stratified society, the possibility of a clash of life worlds and non/acceptance within different spheres. Rather than explore education in terms of access from non/normative social classes as done for example by Bourdieu et al., (1977), Hopper limits his focus to adult students re- engaging in the educational system:

> Adult education and adult students are taken to represent a 'critical case' for the illustration of the perspective which views the education system primarily in terms of society's attempt to solve the fundamental problems of social selection. (Hopper & Osbourn, 1975:13)

At this point, it is important to emphasise that Hopper holds, as a core belief, that education is about the sharing and transformation of knowledge, but that this process

ultimately serves a selection process. By concentrating on mature adults in full time education, Hopper (1981) and Hopper et al.,(1975) were able to focus on the effects on the individual of discontinuities in the socialisation experiences, which would have been experienced if that individual had not deviated from his/her expected socialised trajectory. Whilst this theoretical approach highlights the possibility of marginality it also facilitates examination of the various prestige effects that every individual gathers as a matter of course, as they progress through their life-cycle. The following sections set out the main tenets of Hopper's (1981) conceptualisation of social mobility, those being marginality, structure and selection, insatiability and boundaries, goal orientation, social and structural factors and status rigidity. These all contribute to Hopper's model of social mobility from which six properties of social mobility are derived. Focus is also placed on the variables that impact on social mobility, and the constituency of the adult learner, in addition to placing social mobility within a broader ecosystem as detailed by Hopper (1981).

3.7 Marginality

A marginal person is one who "belongs to or is in transition between two worlds whose norms and values conflict" (Hopper 1975:35). This could result in a status dilemma for the individual regarding his/her social identity or alternatively, at the other end of the scale, it may embolden the person, in the sense that they are more aware of a variety of social perspectives and can view critically the predominant social order. Feelings of relative deprivation may be expressed, for instance, in terms of

social standing or income. Some may experience this as fraternalistic relative deprivation, identifying factors that they deem unfair to a social group as a whole, whilst others may have feelings of egoistic relative deprivation, in terms of their personal economic success and social prestige. Hopper et al., (1975) recorded a particular pattern of deprivation:

Downwardly mobile: Individuals felt that, at this stage in their lives, they compared unfavourably to their family of origin and peers and so were more likely to evidence egoistic feelings of relative deprivation with respect both to economic and status goals. Therefore, although they might talk of wanting fulfilment and similar evaluative goals, economic and status goals were likely to be equally if not more important.

Upwardly mobile: These people may have experienced rejection initially in their schooling and left school with low levels of normative expectations particularly with regard to status and political power. The dominant goal on leaving school was to get some form of job, most likely at a low wage and chosen because it was available rather than desired. The change in the life-trajectory, which saw education having a part in goal setting came about due to influence of other individuals or groups that the individual was exposed to, for instance Hopper (1981) noted that in some instances trade unions formed a bridge into education. This exposure set in train a redefining of goals to incorporate status and possibly political power. This would be expressed in terms of fraternalistic relative deprivation. However, there were others who sought education for self-fulfilment.

Non-mobile: In the studies conducted by Hopper (1981) and Hopper et al., (1975), this group presented a mix of responses. Most had experienced selective schooling and had high levels of normative expectations which were not met even if they were in appropriate jobs. Many in this group sought to improve their chances by getting higher qualifications.

Other factors feeding into experiences of marginality have included not having support, when young, from members of the family of origin. Even for individuals who would have attended schools where academic prowess was the norm, parents were not keen to encourage remaining in education. Often this was as a result of financial problems or some critical event occurring such as a death in the family. Support then came, in later life, from their adult family and/or friends. Aside from family, peer groups were influential during the years in school. Even in a school with a strong academic focus, an individual was unlikely to follow an academic path if his/her peer group were anti-education.

3.8 Structure and Selection

Hopper also posits that all societies exist in an ordered pattern. This position may be contested by theorists holding a postmodernist perspective, purporting that individuals live in a state of perpetual choice, with structure and the habit of structure abandoned by State and individuals in favour of individual choice and consumption, which in and of itself leads to social inequality and instability (Bauman 2000). Nevertheless the fact that there are still, for instance, ranked occupations and policy

endeavours that aim to break the pattern of those from higher social class backgrounds continuing to colonise higher education, could be taken as evidence that Hopper's assertion remains relevant in the present day. From this perspective, all societies share problems of how to select members for various positions in the workforce. Individuals are trained, within their social milieu, in the early portions of their life-cycle, through education systems, and prepared for particular segments of the labour market and thus have values and normative expectations regulated at various phases in this process. Therefore they should identify certain objects as goals based on what their segment of society has been trained to value. They should be imbued with a degree of achievement potential that would facilitate the acquisition of these goals. As a result of their training and their personal skills and abilities they should have a normative expectation of achieving these goals, which of themselves convey particular levels of income and status. An individual's educational amount and route places him/her in a group of similar others, the group consisting of similar ascribed and achieved characteristics. If education has been a successful factor in social control, then individuals should overall be satisfied with their place in the social structure, and experience a relatively good degree of self esteem. This suggests a bizarrely utopian ideal of social organisation, with everybody in their place and happy with their place. However, the mere existence of lifelong education suggests that this is not the case. As Hopper et al, (1975:18) states occupations are regarded as "the single most important source of various kinds of economic, status and political power," then it follows that the ability to access and accomplish a particular educational amount is a key component to accessing power.

Historically, selection of, or allocation to particular education routes have contributed to placement on an occupational hierarchy and associated economic and status hierarchies. However, these assumptions are now in flux (Vogl, 2004) not least because the nature and regard of many occupations is changing, and adults entering education have upset the linear relationship of: education route+ education amount= (occupation +economic reward+ status). Hopper reflects on this linear relation through the lens of adult education provision and suggests this evidences the education system as an inefficient element of social control. As previously suggested, the existence of adult education/lifelong learning is undoubtedly influenced by the need to upskill, the obsolescence of certain jobs and the creation of novel occupations, the size and the age of the working demographic and on occasion, the pursuit of leisure. Adult education and lifelong learning represent both top down efforts to correct systemic errors and bottom up efforts in terms of group agitation[29] to improve their particular lot.

In part, the efficacy of Hopper's approach lies in his consideration of lifelong learning from the both the systemic perspective and the individual perspective. He suggests that an adult engaging in education is responding to a need to adjust instrumentally to some level of difficulty or dissonance that has been experienced in life, this difficulty or dissonance taken to signify an earlier selection error (Hopper et al., 1975). This instrumental adjustment is seen as a legitimate innovation which allows the individual to deal with feelings engendered by either some or all of his economic, status and occupational situations.

[29] Hopper (1981) offers trade unionisation as an example of group agitation.

Re-entering the education arena requires the combination of both situational and personal factors. Situational factors will include the presence of bridging factors, for instance using alternative access routes (such as TAP) into education. Personal factors will include the intensity of a person's achievement orientations in addition to their economic and status orientations. Personal relationships are also of importance, having people in "one's corner," so to speak, who can support the individual in their beliefs and efforts and possibly have knowledge that is of use through the process. Given this enmeshment, Hopper asserted that it is insufficient to regard social mobility objectively as a concept whereby people are either mobile or non mobile, nor is it sufficient to measure it by distance between social class of origin and adult/destination social class or indeed the difficulties/ease with which associated cultural capitals are accommodated. Rather mobility should be studied as a process:

> A series of contingent experiences and interpersonal situations encountered as the individual moved from one social stratum to another, and by one route rather than by another. (Hopper, 1981:3)

This definition of social mobility facilitates an understanding of the plasticity of the human development as a continuous experience, informed not only from the internalisation of external experiences and the amalgamation of same into a repertoire of previously stored experiences, but also the effect that this mix has both on the dispositional and the situational for that individual.

3.9 Insatiability and Boundaries

In order for an individual to engage in change themselves, regardless of what has been systemically made available (for instance access programmes, alternative entry conditions, funding) there has to be some level of dissatisfaction (ranging from minor to gross) within that individual as to aspects of their current situation. Hopper conceptualises this dissatisfaction as being fuelled by insatiability, which he defined as the inability to assess one's personal achievements in comparison with the achievements of others, mainly because one lacked personal boundaries and limits.

Hopper viewed this lack of boundaries and limits as processes that can occur at any stage in the life-cycle and one that is subject to the influence of extraneous variables. This lack of personal boundaries and limits is one side of the coin in Hopper's attempt to explain the personal quest for mobility, the other being that mobility is expressed as a social phenomenon:

> Human beings draw their personal boundaries from the social relationships and cultural patterns of their society at all phases of the life-cycle. Each person differs from others...personality and characters have a social basis, and society and culture have a personal basis in terms of the mediating actions of persons who have emerged from socialized organisms (Hopper, 1981:6).

This definition pays cognisance to the groups an individual belongs to and the social structure and strata within which these groups are embedded. It resonates with Bourdieu et al., (1990) whereby the individual is a conglomeration of internalisation of structures and human agency which is conceptualised as habitus, field and capital. Habitus is personal, the manner in which an individual is disposed to thinking of the world, and thus how his actions are informed for within. Yet how he acts and what he thinks of as appropriate is informed by how he has internalised his social milieu. His manner and behaviour therefore comprises of forms of capital that are appropriate to his social setting, his "field." These concepts have succinctly been demonstrated with reference to a game of cards, whereby the deck is the field, the cards represent the capital and the habitus is each hand play. How each hand can perform within the field is contingent on the cards held and the game in play which is governed by rules in operation. These rules are endemic to the game, and reversing the metaphor to consider human experience, rules would be inherent in the social structure, derived at by power play. Human agency informs and is informed by habitus, habitus is enacted by the operations of the human agent with conscious thought and so is dynamic and capable of change or capable of remaining stable (Ingram, 2011). Hopper (1981), and Bourdieu et al., (1977) all pay cognisance to the effect of the individual on social structures and the effect of social structures on the individual and all offer an explanation as to how an individual might seek mobility, Hopper by evoking the argument of insatiability and Bourdieu of human agency. However, Hopper's approach offers the opportunity to explore personal characteristics beyond aspects of cultural capital that engage to various extents when the actor is being socially mobile,

while at the same time affording examination of the contributions of stratification and education.

3.10 Unpicking the personal-Goal Orientation

According to Hopper (1981), insatiability within the individual is the kernel from which the need for change or challenge grows. This is an important point as it is the point of departure from a particular life-trajectory. This insatiability that the individual experiences, finds focus in goal orientation. There are four components of goal orientation: 1) level of aspiration, 2) level of anticipation, 3) level of normative expectation and 4) level of achievement. Aspiring for a goal, suggests that there is some aspect of the goal (economic reward, and/or status and/or eminence) which is appealing to the actor. Anticipation refers to an actor's belief that a goal is actually achievable. Normative expectations are formed by the individual making comparisons with others equipped with similar status, experience and at similar stages in the life-cycle. He draws points of reference from levels within his own social milieu, at his own particular level of stratification. This aspect of Hopper's theory resonates with Bourdieu's conception of field and capital, whereby an individual develops by internalising the stimuli in his field and thus his own self develops in a field appropriate manner. These three aspects of Hopper's goal orientation (aspiration, anticipation and normative expectation) are present when an actor is weighing up a goal. An individual may have several goal orientations concurrently and the percentage of these aspects present may differ

depending on the particular goal. Level of achievement refers to the amount of the goal or aspects of the goal that the individual possesses. For instance, if the goal is to gain a university degree, the amount of education the individual previously held is an achievement that may facilitate that particular goal orientation. It is these aspects of goal orientation and the manner in which they are evidenced within the life stories of these individuals which I am particularly interested in unpicking.

3.11 Dispositional attitude and goal orientation

Although many people may orient towards the same goal, their attitudes and temperaments may differ, thus impacting on their psyche differently. Hopper was particularly interested in studying the relationship between levels of anxiety, social mobility and academic endeavour of adults. As expounded by Hopper, a mobile individual could experience anxiety (related to interpersonal experiences at particular stages in the life-cycle), driven by insatiability (the inability to maintain boundaries appropriate to one's social space in the strata, or to access personal achievements in comparison to others) and/or by a discrepancy between aspiration and achievement. Measuring levels of anxiety is not the function of this thesis; however it is useful to understand the manner in which it may be manifested in the behaviour of individuals striving for their goals. Aspects of anxiety that may be present include relative deprivation and discontent, feelings of alienation, feelings of personal and social powerlessness, sense of normlessness, feelings of self estrangement, feelings of anomie, feelings of isolation, feelings of occupational and job dissatisfaction. An

achievement orientation is an actor's own evaluation of a particular object as a goal, and the strength of his/her achievement orientation towards that goal will indicate how important that goal is to the actor's current self image and his desired self image. The strength of the achievement orientation could affect levels of anxiety and could render goal orientation pathogenic. An achievement orientation is unlikely to be pathogenic; however goal orientations may be pathogenic and present as either anomogenic, blocking or comparative.

These concepts are defined in terms of the following:

1. *Anomogenic goal orientation*: factors which prevent an actor from forming a satiable level of normative expectation with respect to a particular goal. An example would be a lack of clearly defined pathways with clear rules and guidelines as to what is necessary to constitute satisfaction with respect to particular goal. The greater the number of these factors, the greater the maladaptive feelings (isolation, normlessness) the actor will experience, particularly if they emanate from the individual's interpersonal community. In essence, no matter what an individual achieves, his level of normative expectation continues to rise thus diminishing the value of any achieved goals. Thus the pathogenic discrepancy is always maintained.

2. *Blocking goal orientation*: any condition that impedes an actor's ability to achieve his goal or alters a goal that already exists. For instance, if

there is a need to possess certain skills and/or qualities which are attached to particular goals, if the actor does not possess them, he cannot achieve this goal. If these exist in his interpersonal community, they may result in feelings of personal and social powerlessness. What is impacted in this instance is the level of achievement and not the normative expectation of achievement. However if the individual's level of achievement matches the normative level of expectation, or if the normative level of expectation is adjusted to meet the level of achievement then the result could be relative satisfaction.

3. *Comparative goal orientation*: the value an individual places on a group in respect to its ownership of an object (for instance power, resources) and the location and status of these groups within the social hierarchy. The higher the value of these factors the higher the level of normative expectation of the actor. However his level of achievement is regulated by the level of his/her association with that group. The more embedded he is within that group, the more satisfactory his experience is likely to be. However the more discrepancies that exist between the individual and his reference group/s, the greater the discrepancy between his normative expectations and his likely level of goal achievement.

Hopper (1981) suggests that the most anxious relationship of goal orientation is one where the level of normative expectation exceeds what the individual has already achieved if an individual feels that he has not "lived up" to his potential within his lifeworld in comparison with his reference groups. In his study high anxiety levels were found in populations with high aspiration levels and high achievement levels and goal orientation and goal striving behaviours.

However, a human being develops through social interaction. Whilst the social structure lays the boundaries of behaviour, these have to be accepted by the individual and this is achieved through socialisation via their interactions with friends and family and the cultural patterns embedded in their daily lives. Therefore, in studying social mobility it is necessary to understand how the psychic is structured by society and culture, why discontent exists, discontent being a function of not having what is wanted as much as wanting more than one has, how insatiability is identified, how or whether it is associated with rewards of a stratified social system and how that is manifested.

3.12 Social and Structural Factors

The social strata that are a feature of Western societies are outlined in Table 3.1.[30] Joining a political party usually involves personal choice and a decision to align oneself with a public set of interests and values. In studying social mobility for this thesis, the emphasis will be on the economic and status strata.

Social class refers to both the opportunity to provide for oneself and one's family, to earn income in return for execution of some property or skill as well as the lived experience of this opportunity within the structures of society (Hopper, 1981). The power of social class is usually evidenced as economic power and is considered an important facet as it reflects an individual's opportunity to control his/her life chances. Status is also a form of power and refers to the individual's position within a group and that group's regard of and from other groups in that strata. There can be cross over between the concept of social class and social status

[30] It is important to highlight that this aspect of Hopper's work resonates with that of Weber and also of Marx. Weber (1947) also held that stratification could be viewed in three dimensions: economic class, social status and political power, and noted the difference in power and application of class (economic control) and social status (privilege). Similarly Marx (McLellan, 2006) viewed society as being stratified; viewing it in terms of the relationships that people had with means of production and focused on the concept of class in terms of consciousness, solidarity and conflict.

Table 3-1: Hopper's Conception of Strata

Industrial Societies strata	Economic	Status	Political
Local strata	Class Wealth/Income Economic security Working conditions	Groups ** Core Periphery	Parties Choice Obvious Identity
Consciousness of membership*	Low	Medium to High	High

Note: *consciousness of membership refers to the degree of choice an actor has in belonging to that faction/grouping. It is not to be confused with awareness. For instance an actor may be aware he is situated within a certain social class, but unless there is a consciousness of the grouping or 'community value' of belonging to this grouping then membership of that grouping will be marked for its utilitarian value rather than its community value and thus consciousness of membership will be low . Core and periphery refer to positionality within a group (Hopper 1981).

However, one of the problems in measuring social mobility is that class and status are usually regarded as congruent (for instance in Central Statistics Office classifications and in reports such as: Access to College reports- Clancy 1995) and referred to as social class. Whilst it is true to say that there are occasions when they are congruent, it is equally true that there are many occasions when this is not the case. Hopper (1981), in common with Bourdieu et al., (1977), highlight the fact that a change in class as

measured by occupation can only result in a change in social status if the actor's position in the status group hierarchy is recognised as legitimate by group members and the actor is treated in the same fashion, and gets the same rewards, as one who would already have membership of that group. In otherwords, ascription should not outweigh achievement.

In broader terms, for example, a mature student equipped with a degree is a member of a status group in terms of being a university graduate. However, an employer, either consciously or subliminally, may view a mature graduate as not conforming to the norms of graduate group identity. This could possibly disadvantage the mature individual in terms of being successful in gaining work with that employer. Consequently although the individual has acquired the status of graduate (denoting acquirement of specific skills and knowledge) he may not be successful in acquiring an occupation associated with the social class background taken (by the employer) to be the presumed normative social class background of graduates. As a consequence the individual experiences incongruence between his social class and status and may not get to enjoy the rewards commensurate with his education.

An individual may experience incongruence between economic and status strata as a result of:

a) Incongruence between the economic return and the status of the occupation.
b) Incongruence between the economic return and status in terms of the reputation and amount of education necessary for the occupation.

c) Between two status positions (one measured by the reputation of the occupation and the other by the reputation and amount of education).

It is incongruence between two positions that can lead to feelings of relative deprivation in the individual, feelings of discontent which in turn influence achievement and goal orientations.

3.13 Status Rigidity

However, an aspect of particular note, when trying to unmesh aspects of the individual and aspects of the structure of society in order to understand the concept of social mobility, is that of status rigidity. For the 'non-mobile', status rigidity may offer support in the sense of belonging to tightly knit groups, but those who are mobile may experience marginality. However for others, status rigidity would impede social mobility by increasing the social distance between status groups and between the core and peripheries within status groups. Even if a society appears to encourage educational and occupational mobility, but has embedded status rigidity, then the greater the levels of status incongruence, the slower and less effective the social mobility. Determinants of status rigidity include:

1) The distinctiveness of a different lifestyle associated with status groups and the degree of difficulty that this would pose for a newcomer in shedding of self or acquiring aspects to self as appropriate to each status group, particularly after childhood.

2) The degree to which status groups are mutually exclusive both in terms of group membership and between group relationships.

3) The degree of social distance both between and within status groups on the same level of the social hierarchy as well as different levels of the social hierarchy, and between the core and periphery of groups.

4) The level of acceptance or rejection of an adult social class of an individual being upwardly or downwardly mobile. For instance, a middle class group may be more accepting of a middle class individual without a degree than a working class individual with one.

5) The social distance between social class of origin and adult social class.

6) The relationship between an acquired economic position and its associated status group and the ease and speed in which this association can be legitimised.

7) The gatekeeping of status groups of particular occupations in terms of recruiting, training and promotion, for example, professional requirements.

8) The manner in which the educational system regulates and stratifies entry with respect to preparation, selection and training and the embedding of expectation.

9) The manner in which occupations are organised, (bureaucratically or professionally), and the situs of an occupation.

(Hopper 1981)

3.14 Hopper's model of Social Mobility

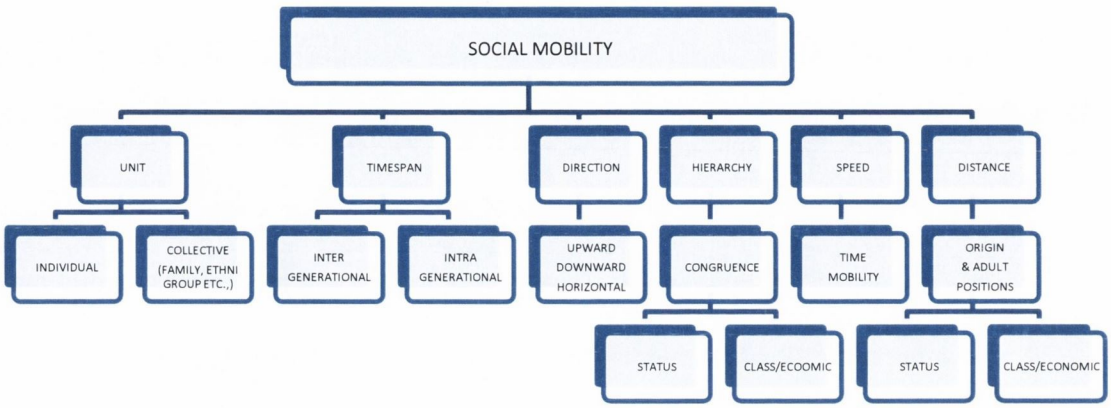


Figure 3-1: Hopper's Model of Properties of Social Mobility (derived from Hopper, 1981)

Hopper designated six properties of social mobility: unit, timespan, direction, hierarchy, speed and distance.

In explicating Hopper's model:

1. Unit: this can refer either to an individual or to groups such as a family or an ethnic group, for example, Irish Americans within the United States, being a mature student within a body of traditional students.
2. Time span: being either inter generational or intra generational. These have been referred to earlier in this chapter and Hopper's interpretation is in accord with the former, referring to changes between an inherited ranked position (for instance one based on a father's occupation) and that of another rank achieved

during an individual's life-cycle. However, the definition of inter-generational mobility is both fluid and far reaching, can refer to upward and downward mobility and can take as a base measurement that of earlier ancestors. Therefore, attempting to measure mobility in this manner can be problematic, for instance what stage of your father's ancestor's career do you choose as a base line? Should age be chosen and ranks of that age compared? Or should peak occupation or time of retirement be chosen for comparison? What about situations where mothers were employed? It is especially difficult when considering mature individuals who are subject to extraneous variables, for instance non-(paid)working married women being assigned their ranked position based on either their father's or their husband's rank. Intra generational mobility refers to movement of the individual from one position to another during the course of his lifetime. This can occur with some, all or none of others in your 'unit', and at different times and stages within the life-cycle. Intra-generational movement can also be problematical in the sense that the regard and associated status allotted to a rank can change over time, sometimes over a very brief time period, so for instance a "nice steady pensionable job" may be a pinnacle of achievement in recessionary times, but may be less valued in an era of prosperity.

3. Direction: the focus is most often on upward mobility however it is also possible to have downward and horizontal mobility. Mobility may not be at the same direction or speed within different hierarchies. For instance there may be upward mobility as defined occupationally which would not be matched within an adjacent status grouping, or indeed within subgroupings. Horizontal

mobility refers to movement within situs whereby the work may remain the same but the situs may change, resulting in both/either economic and/or status rewards.

4. Hierarchy: if economic and status hierarchies are congruent, then mobility will be equal in both. If they are not congruent this will be reflected accordingly in mobility. One may gain a highly paid and placed occupation for instance but not gain what may be perceived of as membership of appropriate status groups (for instance members clubs, business associations). As highlighted earlier in this chapter, congruence can be problematical in terms of social mobility. For instance an assembly line worker, may benefit from overtime pay, and thus be regarded as having power in gaining economic reward (being economically mobile in terms of receiving flat rate or overtime or additional skill payment) when compared with an office clerk at the same firm who earns less, but the office clerk may enjoy a higher status ranking. However occupations can also be associated with status groups and the levels of acceptance of the individual by the core and periphery will dictate the actual degree of prestige that an individual can enjoy as a result of his/her occupational position. Status legitimisation will only occur, according to Hopper (1981) if all members of the core and periphery rank the actor newcomer in the same fashion and to the same degree as they would a non mobile person who would traditionally have held the same/similar occupation.
5. Distance: usually refers to the amount of social distance between an individual's point of origin and adult position in both or either status and economic terms, custom suggests the use of ordinal ranking of occupations as

used in State census and collection of data. Yet this poses problems as it is not possible to say that the difference between one set of ranks is the same as the difference between any other set of ranks. It also only affords consideration of head of household, thus not recognising or acknowledging the hidden capitals that may be the remit of the other parent of the individual.

6. Speed: this refers to the length of time it takes to move between positions. Distance and route exert an impact on speed. Distance has already been discussed, route refers to qualities of the educational journey undertaken rather than properties of mobility. For instance, one educational route will differ from another even if the amount of education received is similar. Graduates who attend traditional universities are more likely to have the opportunity for upward mobility given that 'blue chip' companies are more likely to target these institutions than graduates who attend non traditional universities (Egerton, 2000). The amount of education one has will also impact on speed, those with interrupted education or little formal education will take longer in moving through a social class hierarchy than those who would have a tertiary education.

3.15 Variables that impact on Social Mobility

In addition to status rigidity, life-cycle, life-trajectory and routes are variables that impact particularly on social mobility. The notion of routes is particularly relevant with respect to education (Goldthorpe, 2007). Whilst universal education within the Irish

and within the UK, guaranteed a structure of free State education at primary, secondary and subsidised tertiary levels,[31] it does not follow that all citizens gain equal opportunity to advance economically, socially or personally as a result (Clancy 1995). The reasons for this are manifold, encompassing issues of social poverty, injustice, health, access and location. It is worth reiterating that education can be regarded as a "sorting house" streaming individuals into areas where their skills can be developed to match with societal needs throughout the hierarchy (Hopper et al., 1975). Some routes (such as attending a private school) may be more associated with social mobility than others (Reay, 2008). Egerton (2000) noted that in the UK elite universities were less likely to accommodate mature students in comparison to newer post 1992 universities, leading to mature students being unable to attract the wage premium associated with elite universities. Therefore, amounts of education do not appear to equal parallel routes (Windolf, 1997; Livingstone, 1999; Karabel, 2006). Indeed a somewhat crude analogy was posited by Karabel (2006) when community colleges and prestigious institutions were compared to yellow pack and designer labels.

Two other variables that impact on social mobility, which usually progress in parallel, are life-trajectory and life-cycle. The former refers to the mostly structured pathway an actor takes through life. Whilst some (Beck 1992, Bauman 2000), may argue that this is determinist, and not reflective of the experiential interpretations of the individual's reality, or reflective of present day social flux, arguably the interpretations

[31] A registration fee is charged to attend an Irish public third level institution which by 2015 was E3000, in the UK there were some variation between England, Scotland and Wales, but tuition fees of £1000 were introduced in 1998 rising through Government intervention . The Browne report (2010) proposed removing the cap on fees, this being passed in Parliament resulting in third level institutions being able to charge up to £9000 per annum.

of one's lived experience are influenced from birth by the social structures within which one is embedded.

Whilst one might think that, by living in a democracy, one is faced with a plethora of choices merely there for the taking, in reality choices are more or less defined from very early stages by one's position in a bureaucratised society (Fleming et al., 2009) thence the parallel sequencing of life-trajectory and life-cycle. Therefore whilst educational routes have a huge influence on the life-trajectory of an individual (Egerton 2000) the life-trajectory has an equal and in most cases finite influence on the educational routes available. The life-cycle of an individual can be seen as a series of markers or milestones along the path from cradle to grave. The notion of a life-cycle subscribes to stage theories of development. These stages usually progress in a sequential fashion for both mobile and non- mobile people. Careers, be they education, familial or occupational are good examples of such sequential progression (Hopper 1981). The mature student, however, looking to take chances and make choices, either not available or selected at the "correct" stage in their life violates the sequential progression of the life-cycle and life-trajectory. Figure 3.2 presents an overview of the variables associated with social mobility in terms of the ecosystem within which it is nested.

3.16 The mature adult learner

> The new adult student would not be correctly characterised by being either an adult or a student but by having incorporated education in a social construction of human life which supersedes the traditional notions of the social division of labour. (Hopper et al., p:ii:1975)

This definition is particularly useful with respect to this thesis concerning mature students entering third level education within Ireland. It pays cognisance to the fact that a mature student is not merely an adult who violates a particular trajectory to return and assume a mantle missed in early years[32]. He/she is not someone with only teenage experiences, he/she will have knowledge and experiences that they cannot 'unknow' and which shape their present self. It is this present self that assumes the student mantle. In this study it is of particular interest to explore how flexible this student mantle can become in facilitating the mature individual in addition to learning whether the mature individual feels the need to shed the self or layer the self in order to fulfil the student role. The student role, in this thesis, is explored in terms of the extent and diversity of engagement within the academy.

[32] In the sense that in Ireland the cultural norm is for a front loading system of education with third level attendance commencing directly after second level finishes, subject to having acquired the required qualifications.

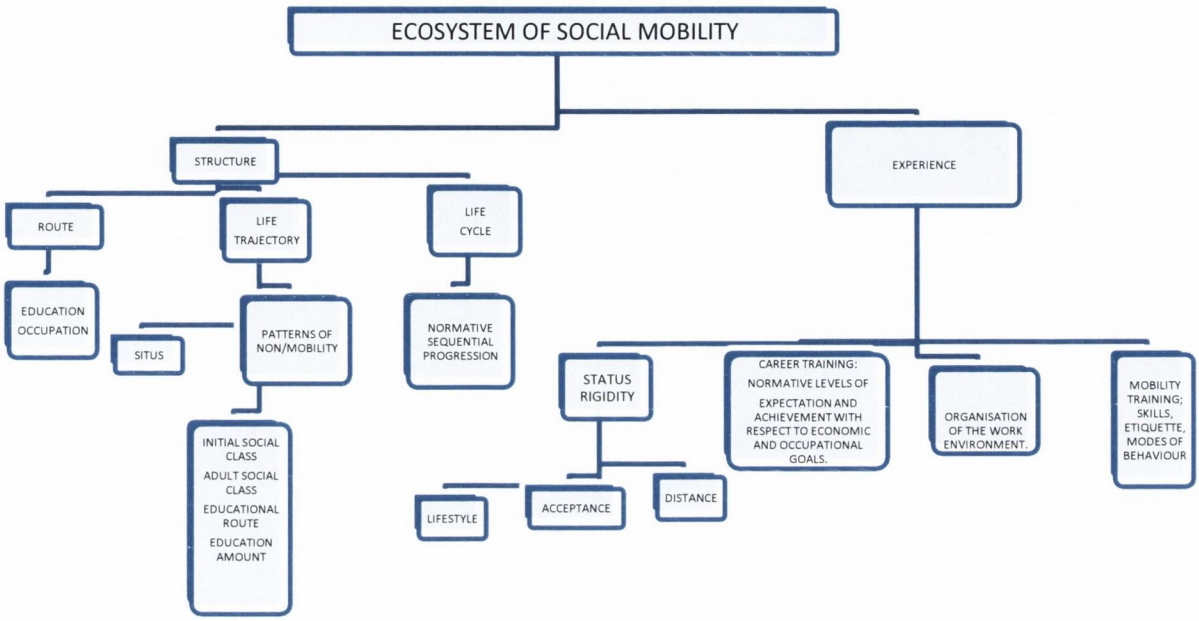


Figure 3-2 : Ecosystem encapsulation of the concepts affecting social mobility as expounded upon by Hopper (1981)

3.17 Chapter Summary

Social stratification has long engaged scholarly attention (Breen, 2010; Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997, 2002; Clancy, 1995). Education has long been regarded as a means to both embedding stratification (Hopper et al., 1975; Smith, Hasley in Hopper, 1971; Clancy, 2001; Bourdieu et al., 1990) whilst also being noted as a means of performing systemic corrections (Hopper 1971, Marks & McMillian 2003), however its success in

this area is contested (Blandon 2008, Bowles, 1976; Breen & Jonsson, 2005; Karabel, 2006; Livingstone, 1999; Windolf 1997).

Hopper's original approach sought to assess how effective education was at performing systemic corrections, to disentangle social class from status, (paying particular attention to probing group effects), to delineate aspects of social mobility beyond stratification and to explore why individuals chose to disjoin their life-cycles and life trajectories. Hopper's work took place in the 1970s and early 1980s, and is influenced by the work of classical theorists and their contributions to the study of social mobility. Hopper's work was eclipsed by the popularity of the theoretical approach of Bourdieu et al., (1977). Sociological approaches focus on the manner in which society is organised, and the manner in which outcomes are influenced by context, norms and actions. Psychological approaches focus on how the individual contributes to social behaviour. In Hopper's (1981) ontological approach there is a blending of both psychological and sociological approaches leading to the potential to unpick the core of variables from an individual perspective whilst not ignoring the social milieu within which the individual is embedded.

According to Hopper, engaging in education as an adult would require personal attributes such as motivation to succeed, motivation to have a better economic and /or status orientation and structural characteristics by which this could be achieved. He sought to associate different levels of anxiety with goal orientations. This particular aspect of his approach, however, is not being replicated in the current study as it requires the use of anxiety scales and it is felt unnecessarily views social mobility

through a pathological lens. The main reason that Hopper's theory has been adopted as a guiding framework for the development of this research is to aid in the exploration of social mobility and its relevance (as suggested in social policy directives) in the present day. The efficacy of his conceptually detailed approach facilitates theory building and the non-pathologising of mobility. This is done by casting a lens on the life histories of those individuals who have participated, and attempting to explore the totality of their experiences, both positive and negative that have accrued in their life journeys and association with education rather than focusing on negative affects or deficits. Of particular interest is exploring the notion of insatiability as a driving force within the individual, investigating family effects in order to explore whether or not these exhibit a social class bias, attempting to understand why education is chosen as a vehicle of change and to ascertain whether it is possible to develop the concept of social mobility beyond that of stratification towards one of fluidity where "taken for granted" value systems can be explored.

By way of introduction, this chapter began by contemplating two contrasting theoretical approaches to human development and outlining the reasons behind lifespan development being most appropriate when considering adult (re) engagement in education. From this a consideration of group behaviour was offered in order to elucidate the structures and boundaries that an individual will encounter as a group member and as a group member seeking change. Aids to engaging in change in terms of fortuitous events, socialisation and attitude formation were then explored. Finally a lens was cast on the use of social mobility as explanation for change with justification

given as to the use of Hopper's concept of social mobility as a guide in developing this study. The next chapter will elucidate further the design and completion of this study.

4 Chapter Four-Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the conceptual and theoretical viewpoints that have guided the development and analysis of this thesis. This chapter will explain the research approach and the steps taken in analysing the data. The rationale for this study is to acquire a deeper understanding of the role education plays in the lives of mature adults, to make sense of their decision making processes, and to explore the efficacy of social mobility frameworks in terms of social policy fit with individual intent and outcome as a result of engaging in Higher Education. This chapter outlines and justifies the design of this study, methods used in conducting this research, characteristics of the sample, characteristics of data collection, approaches taken in data analysis, the ethical considerations and the limitations of the research. The following list of research objectives and research questions were devised in response to the existing body of literature on the experiences of mature students in higher education and the social policies that have facilitated their education.

4.2 Objectives

These objectives have been formulated (Blaikie, 2005) in order to explore, explain and assess the impact of the association that the mature individual has had in his/her lifetime with education and to gain further understanding of the extent to which social mobility is a feature of this relationship.

a) To explore whether social mobility is an adequate explanation of the intent and result of mature adults' engagement in higher education.

b) To gain insight into the value placed on the concept of education within the lives of the mature adults sampled.

c) To explore factors that may have impeded or encouraged a valuing of education within the lives of this sample.

d) To gain knowledge as to the factors that causes a mature adult to deviate from a particular life path and engage in third level education.

e) To understand how they experience the college journey.

f) To critique the concept of social mobility.

4.3 Research Questions

Research questions are a critical part of the design of a social research study, and are key to the planning and implementation of research (Blaikie, 2005; Yin, 1993; & Robson, 2011). These research questions have been devised to best define the study, set boundaries within which the study will progress, focus attention such that the study should be able to provide credible answers whilst at the same time being flexible enough to attend to any novel data discovered (O'Leary, 2004).

1. What are the triggers or events that cause people to decide to go to college as mature students?
2. What are their assumptions?

3. How did they relate to academic staff and traditional aged students within college?
4. What (if any) support systems did they value within the home and within the college?
5. How did the process of going to college and emerging as a degree holder affect employment, personal outcome and social opportunities?
6. Has a third level education changed their ways of thinking, their behaviour or their routine habits?

4.4 Research Design

The starting point of this study was to conduct a critical literature review (Chapter Two) which incorporated the historical development of lifelong learning and informing regarding experiences of mature graduates in the workforce. This review highlighted a dominance in policy agendas[33] of linkages between lifelong education and the labour market, the dominant suggestion being that mature individuals, could be facilitated (without the usual qualifications) in third level institutions to best prepare themselves for the demands of the labour market. They were being afforded a route to and through education that heretofore may not have been available to them and thus "wrongs could be righted" in terms of their being able to engage in occupations commensurate with their level of intellect, skills and knowledge. This narrative did not resonate with me when I reflected on my own and my contemporaries' experience of

[33] Refer to chapter two for explication of policy documents within the international and national domain.

mature studentship. A proponent of reflexivity in terms of declaring my personal history and interest in the subject matter (Wilkinson, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994), nevertheless I did not want my experience to dominate the research study. Therefore I wanted to frame the research conceptually and in doing so be able to explore the relationship between the variables being studied (Miles et al., 1994). I chose then to develop the research by situating the study of the relationship that mature adult students had with education within a framework of social mobility, as social mobility seems best to describe one of the dominant aims within policy recommendations and I thought it was timely to investigate the efficacy of social mobility in this regard. In using a conceptual framework I was choosing to use a "system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs [my] research" (Maxwell, 2005:33). As explained in chapter three, I used a particular theorist's (Earl Hopper) paradigm of social mobility supported by other theoretical insights that aided understanding of the phenomena.

The definition of a mature student adopted was that of the Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA): "A person over 23 years of age at the time of enrolment on a full-time undergraduate degree programme in a higher education institution funded by the Higher Education Authority of Ireland" (HEA, 2005).

The study of social mobility is often focused on quantitative investigation mapping trans-generational occupational change across large data sets (Bertaux & Thompson, 2006). However, such an approach masks the complexity of social mobility, which encompasses, for example, the study of the individuals' career, the means of social

mobility available both structurally and within the private sphere, the process by which mobility is undergone, and the consequences of social mobility (Lipset & Bendix,1991). Since the 1990s there has been a shift away from the dominance of empirical research towards employing qualitative approaches which value local and personal knowledge and are historically and culturally grounded (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This growth in the use of qualitative methods is particularly helpful in exploring the interplay of structure and agency in social life (Bryman, 2001; Chamberlayne, Rustin & Wengraf 2002). Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2002), referring to the "biographical turn" hold that knowing the life history of an individual, and the structures and processes that contributed to this, help us to understand the individual more fully. This is of particular value in studying groups of people who might occupy minority positions and those groups who may have been under researched in official and academic studies (ibid).

I used a case study approach employing life history analysis. Case studies preserve the unitary character of the social phenomena being studied and are relevant to real life contemporary settings (Blaikie, 2005; Yin 2009) and can be defined individually or collectively, can be human, or refer to institutions or communities (Gillham, 2000). A case study focuses on context, encompasses unstructured data and is suited to indepth, intensive analysis (Yin, 2009). Gillham (2000) regards the importance of conducting case studies to be situated in the nuanced findings which inform on specificities of that particular case study.

There is some dissent as to whether a case study can be described as a methodology (Creswell, 2007;Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009) or purely as the subject matter to be studied (Stake, 2010). Stake (2010) holds a similar perspective to Geertz (1973) that case studies yield 'thick description' which explain behaviour with reference to symbolic and cultural context and as such this explanation of phenomena has the potential to be generalisable.

In this instance this was a multiple case study (comprising of 26 mature students who had attended and graduated from Trinity College), and my use of a case study design was in keeping with Yin's (2009) interpretation and I employ case study as a methodological tool to organise, manage and view the research within a real life context.

As this research was adopting a retrospective lens, a life history was appropriate as it directs a lens onto the individual's life story and personal experience, through which their relationship with education can be traced. Forging an identity is an ongoing dynamic process with the individual shaped by interactions with the environment across time (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). There is an assumption in adopting a life history approach that a life is not lived in isolation, but rather influences and is influenced by interactions between the individual and the environment at social, cultural, historic and eco levels (Plummer, 2000). The telling of stories highlights both the collective and the individualistic experience and thus contributes to our understanding of culture (Johnston and Merrill 2004).

Mature students engaging with higher education bring with them a range of experiences that most likely are not the remit of traditional students, including sometimes, previous negative engagement with education. Nevertheless mature students form a highly heterogeneous cohort not only in terms of life experience, but also in terms of age, social background, cultural constraint and privilege, family responsibilities. All of these biographical experiences contribute to pivoting the individual towards adopting attitudes and behaviours that lead to (re) engagement in HE (Johnston & Merrill, 2004). Archer (2007) uses the phrase "internal conversations" to describe how individuals make sense of their life and the way in which these guide the individuals towards occupations and occupational decisions.

The sample for this study involved people of different ages (23- 75 year olds) and this approach illuminated the choice and inhibitors that contextualised individuals' lives throughout different eras. In doing so it also captured the social and cultural nuances with regard to education provision and engagement. Thus life histories explicate the common and the uncommon across cultures and social spheres (Plummer, 2000) and allow the little stories, the likes and dislikes and the personal interactions with (in this case) education be told (Goodson & Skyes, 2001).

> A culture through the history of one person's development of life within it, told in ways that capture the person's development of life within it, told in ways that capture the person's own feelings, views, and perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:121).

Interrogating life histories as a research approach, contributes to broadening understanding of the different forms of knowledge that mature students add to the academic sphere, which in turn, should be of use in developing policy that will accommodate change at institutional level. Although the narrator is relating a story from a subjective viewpoint, s/he is at the same time contributing to objective understanding by revealing information about their interactions with society, which are context and era dependent and also pointing to the mal/adaptive influence of others on their particular life path (Archer, 2007).

Scheff (Chamberlayn et al., 2002) draws attention to the historical dimension, by suggesting that in addition to acknowledging the present perspective of a narrator, and their personal history, we also need to pay cognisance to history in a broad contextual sense. Scheff refers to a biographic-interpretive method (BIM) which guides the researcher through a set of stages including paying cognisance to the lived life and the told story. The lived life is information (of objective historical facts pertinent to the narrator's life and life events as they occurred) expressed during interview and possibly sourced from additional documentation. The told story is the subjective story in terms of how the narrator presents himself during the interview. Roberts (2002) distinguishes between the life story as being the work of the narrator and the life history being the interpretive presentation of the researcher.

However, criticism has been levelled at this approach, mainly in terms of process, definition, conceptual diversity and analysis. With respect to process, Stanley & Morgan (1993) argue that a biographical approach is selective, and as such it has to be

recognised that such an approach has to accept that there are omissions to the data. Gardner (2001), in a similar vein, draws attention to the accuracy of memory over time and the validity of relying on same, suggesting that life history telling, results in data based on life events rather than facts. However, in counterargument, the purpose of life history is not to establish facts but to, " connect biographies and lived experiences ... to the groups and social relationships that surround and shape persons" according to Denzin (1989:82) and the significance of such narrative is not in "adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, desire break in" (Portelli, 1981:100).

Roberts (2002) and Bertaux (1981) draw attention to the interchangeability of terms; oral history, narrative, personal narrative, life story, biography have regularly been used in lieu of life history. Debate has also occurred on the use of supporting documentation and indeed the array of conceptual approaches (and traditions therein) employing life histories (Roberts, 2002) as cross- cultural research teams can testify. The Ranlhe project[34] is a pertinent example with regard to this thesis. Johnston, Merrill, Holliday, West, Fleming & Finnegan (2009) emphasise that although the project focus is on non-traditional students, (this in itself being a broad remit encompassing students who are first generation university students within their family, ethnic minorities, those from low income backgrounds, those with disabilities and mature students) there is evidence within the working research teams of different theoretical and epistemological approaches and also the use of different terminology

[34] The Ranlhe project is exploring the access and retention experiences of non-traditional earners in Higher Education in seven countries: Ireland, Spain, Poland, Sweden, England, Scotland and Germany. http://www.dsw.edu.pl/fileadmin/www-ranlhe/

in describing life history, biography and narrative. In part this has been attributed to the different intellectual traditions emanating from different countries which have shaped the way researchers employ biographical research (ibid). West (Johnston et al., 2009) offers as an example the different approaches between the German and UK traditions whereby the former has focused on building an objective understanding of life histories in order to emphasise and enhance the robustness of the method. The latter tradition, however, questions the nature of objectivity and its dominance in analysis and focuses instead on understanding the intersubjectivity present in life history research and how the "truth" is constructed from the analysis. Merrill (1997) highlights that even within a country there can be different approaches contributing to the national research project output, noting that the Warwick team draws from a sociological paradigm whilst the Canterbury team draws from psychological and psychosocial paradigms. Johnston et al., (2009) further note that there exists not just intra and inter country variation in definition and approach but also different approaches within individual teams, for instance Merrill and Johnston have drawn on symbolic interactionism, feminism and critical theory, thus best reflecting, in their opinion, both structure and agency.

Riessman (2001) highlights the fact that the diversity evident in definition and approach ripples through to analysis. Miller (2000) suggests that the three most common approaches to analysis are; narrative, realist and neo-positive. The narrative approach involves interrogating scripts to identifying emerging themes; the realist approach adopts some grounded theory procedures by building interviews upon interviews, using the acquired knowledge to become more specific during sessions,

until a point of saturation is reached[35]; the neo- positivist approach focuses on validating theory against empirical reality, interviews being guided by the topic of interest. However, analysis often reflects a merger in cultural tradition and conceptual underpinnings of the research approach.

In using a life history approach an opportunity is afforded to glean those critical often small events that have acted as turning points in a life (Bandura, 1982). It is critical to remember that the patterns of life that are being revealed by the teller result from negotiated subjectivity where the teller is trying to make sense of their lives (Goodson & Skyes, 2001). As a researcher I have to be sensitive to this and mindful of my position and my power in interpreting their stories (Foucault, 1980, Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Germeten (2013) outlines five points to be cognisant of when conducting life history research; the role of the researcher, who is working to gain knowledge about a particular theme or construct and the "amateur of life" who is the person being researched. The researcher is goal orientated in seeking knowledge whereas the teller may not be so orientated or indeed may have another agenda and other goals in agreeing to be interviewed. The power relationship would rest with the researcher in devising the research and setting the agenda, and eventually interpreting the stories. However in the process of the life history interview the power may shift back and forth between the teller and the researcher. The teller is the repository of the knowledge that the researcher requires, and even with a skilled researcher, the teller is in control of the amount and veracity of the story that s/he communicates. The last two points in Germeten's proposition of life history analysis are particularly pertinent: at the point

[35] The most famous example being Znaniecki's Polish Peasant research (ref 1920/1990)

of interview, a story is being told that is evidence of a life lived at a specific time and within a specific milieu. It is the researcher that deconstructs and constructs that story as a life history in such a way as to serve the research objectives. At this stage the power balance rests with the researcher who has to be mindful of personal biases in interpretation (ibid).

In all social research ethics is of paramount importance. As is good practise ethics committees are in place in the Schools in Trinity College and this research proposal was reviewed prior to the study commencing. Access to the sample frame (mature students who had attended Trinity College between 1995-2005) was negotiated with the Student Records Office (SRO). Access to this data set (student number, course, course code, degree, date of birth, contact details) was provided to the supervisor who agreed to act as gatekeeper in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988.

4.4.1 By way of an introduction to the research design: From surveys to life histories

Initially, this study was designed to utilize a mixed methods approach incorporating a substantive quantitative aspect, whereby a large sample would be invited to participate by survey, with a smaller number of participants being selected for personal interview. It was designed to test a hypothesis related to third level education and social mobility; that there will be an effect of age, gender, class of origin and levels of self efficacy and course choice on the social, personal and economic returns of a university degree for mature individuals. Focusing on one institution with

an elite status meant that the effect of certain variables could be minimised, for instance the type of institution, difference in admission procedures, college regulations and academic reputation. This sample was drawn from the mature population that had successfully participated in undergraduate degree courses between 1995-2005 in Trinity College Dublin. Access to mature student records was negotiated and granted by the Student Records Office of Trinity College Dublin. The intention was to have a survey which would have been administered by questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed and piloted among a small number of mature graduates (six) who were recruited through convenience and purposive sampling. The purpose of the pilot was to gain feedback on the questionnaire more so than statistically test the instrument, and their comments were taken into account on subsequent redrafts.

However, two issues arose as the study evolved. The first issue was the publication of an exemplary Combat Poverty Report into the work and life experiences of mature students from three universities; NUI Maynooth, DIT and TCD (Fleming et al., 2009). The sample drawn from TCD incorporated those who had studied in the university from 1997-2003, which was more or less the same population targeted for the current study, with the questionnaire covering very similar ground. There followed discussions as to how different aspects of the survey questionnaire could be prioritised and developed, such as the focus on course choice and the impact of same on future opportunities. However, a decision was finally made, that the information garnered could not ethically justify approaching the same population and quite likely getting substantial sample overlap for a similar survey questionnaire.

A purist approach would suggest starting again from a clean slate. However, a pragmatic approach had to recognise that this was funded research, and there was, in a sense, a duty of care to the funding body in utilizing where possible the thus far researched material, yet this had to be balanced by an academic rigour in doing justice to the field of enquiry and considering alternative approaches to exploring the subject matter. Aside from these concerns, there is the common sense appreciation that all information garnered, "does what it says on the tin" in the sense that it informs on the topic.

The second issue involved the usefulness of retaining Hopper's conceptual framework in developing the research as it had been developed primarily for use in quantitative studies measuring the social mobility of individuals and the levels of anxiety ensuing. Hopper's work took place in the 1970s and 1980s but was eclipsed by the popularity of the theoretical approach of Bourdieu et al., (1977). Yet in Hopper's ontological approach there was potential to unpick core variables from an individual perspective whilst paying cognisance to the social milieu within which the individual was embedded. His theoretical style was detailed enough to facilitate modification to his model which had been of interest to me when planning the original research as I had sought to substitute his scales of anxiety with scales of self efficacy or locus of control. I had considered the measurement of anxiety as adopting a deficit approach and pathologising social mobility whereas to measure self efficacy or/and locus of control would couch social mobility in terms of personal positive attributes.

I had also been interested in exploring his notion of mobility as a process rather than a fixed attribute in order to see whether there was potential to develop the notion of social mobility beyond that of stratification. The process concept seemed particularly pertinent in the present era, given that occupations and occupational values, associated statuses and financial returns are in a state of flux, and it was of interest to explore whether social mobility could be reconceptualised as a movement along different paths rather than through different strata. This could however, leave the study open to the charge that a focus on the individual ignored the social. This too was a reason for retaining Hopper's approach in framing the research, as the social is not ignored. Within the concept there is acknowledgement of the perpetuation of social constraints and of group power in terms of reinforcing same. It would also offer reflection on the fit of social policy wedding education to labour market outcome. In addition, Hopper (1981) himself had identified a weakness in his own research; having acknowledged the latent power of status, he did not feel that the survey approach was a successful measure of same as the aspect of status can be emotive and hidden in layers of experience, and so perhaps not best served by quantitative analysis.

Ultimately the decision to retain Hopper as a guiding theorist rested on one particular tenet of this theory, that I venture to suggest is somewhat overlooked in other theoretical approaches and in the broader body of research; that of insatiability. This seemed to be an important pointer to broader critical thinking about mature educational engagement in life. If an individual was making changes in his/her life there had to be an element in their present life that was not to some degree satisfying, one which they thought education could fulfil. I therefore decided that rather than

refining the survey approach in order to extend the current knowledge base on social mobility, it would be more useful to adopt a qualitative approach. Doing so would facilitate exploration of the "hows" and "whys" of the mature experience rather than the "whats" which would have been served by the original quantitative approach. Taking a qualitative approach, it was felt could contribute rich detail to the patterns outlined by studies of objective social mobility (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Patterns of mobility portrayed in census studies study movement between occupations and inform on objective social mobility, however a qualitative approach would best facilitate exploring the motivations of the self in violating social norms, the status attached to forms of capital and its use in negotiating change, the value attached to mobility as a journey rather than a destination, the extent to which the ability to mobilise the self is a consequence of social or personal advantage and the extent to which the self or the acquired positions dominate further mobility, all of which contextualise subjective social mobility.

An additional concern was that my doctoral work was being facilitated, in the initial stages, within a policy department and in focusing on the individual I was laying myself open to the charge that I was expressing a neo-liberal agenda in focusing predominately on individual autonomy, with such an approach failing to give due consideration to those not in a position to exploit educational privilege as they were caught in cycles of disadvantage. With careful consideration, my response in this circumstance is that policy, to be relevant must always have an eye to those whose needs are not being addressed by current provision. However, personal agency and autonomy should not necessarily be regarded as a negative affect or tied to any

political agenda, neo liberal or other. Whilst nested within a social milieu, it is personal volition that drives individual intent for constancy or for change regardless of the social background of an individual. It is in meeting this intent that the effectiveness of policies, neo-liberal or otherwise, can be examined.

4.4.2 Procedure

This section will layout the steps taken in planning and executing the research study. To this end a life history qualitative approach, employing case studies, was adopted for this thesis which interrogated the life histories of the participants. Case studies are suited to research on human activity within the social world (Denscombe, 2007). The case study for this research was mature individuals who had been students at Trinity College between 1995-2005 and who had successfully graduated. The usefulness of this approach is in building convincing connections between individual histories and wider social theory (Merrill & West, 2009). This approach was chosen as being efficacious in probing concepts of insatiability, in exploring commonly held assumptions regarding social class and education, and in providing insight into the motivations, perceptions and attributions of individuals and how these contributed to the structuring and restructuring of their identities in terms of violating the normative parallel sequencing of life-cycles and life trajectories. The decision to focus on one institution was retained. Although the original hypothesis focused on the returns of a college education to a mature student graduate, based on personal variables and course choice, I felt that the revised objectives of the thesis would still benefit from reducing extraneous variables, (which would arise for instance in a comparative study,

such as a study of mature students in two different institutions) and retaining focus on the experiences within one institution, which would meet the requirements of a case study in the sense of having specified boundaries (Denscombe, 2007). All participants would have been subject to uniform admission procedures, college regulations, and academic reputation of TCD as outlined earlier in this thesis. Prior to beginning the sampling and data capture, the literature review was revised to accommodate the change in the thesis specifically by incorporating international and national experiences of mature graduates in the higher education arena.

4.4.3 Access negotiation, sample and sampling strategy

In all social research, adherence to good ethical practises is of major importance and therefore ethics committees in the Schools of TCD review research proposals prior to the studies commencing. The sample was to be selected from mature students who had successfully graduated from TCD. Therefore, student records served as a sampling frame and access to same was required for this thesis. TCD has a duty of care to its students and staff and protects the privacy of records as is required under the Data Protection Act 1988. In accordance with same, access could not be granted to the researcher directly by the student records office (SRO) of TCD but was facilitated by the supervisor of the study, who negotiated access to the following data on mature students from 1995-2005: name, student number, phone number, address, email, faculty and course of study and year of entry. Data provided by the SRO for the years 1995-2005 yielded 3561 names. This time period was chosen primarily for two reasons: (1) it allowed a pattern of employment to emerge. According to Purcell et al.,

(2007) it can take up to five years post graduation for an employment pattern to emerge, and (2) it would reflect trends and patterns in the broader economy and be used to reflect on broader social influences (The Celtic Tiger and Recession) on the experiences of mature individuals. Screening and cleaning reduced this to N=3490: M (2166), F (1324) with the dispersal across age groups outlined in table 4.1. Cases excluded included those which did not include date of birth or degree descriptor. TCD has three Faculties offering, for this time period 17 degree courses through 24 Schools. 44% of mature students attended the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 42% attended the Faculty of Health Sciences and 14% attended the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science.

Table 4-1: Distribution of mature students (age and gender) in TCD 1995-2005

Age Group	23-32	33-42	43-52	53-62	63 plus	Total
Female	239	1217	457	195	58	2166
Male	102	748	340	88	46	1324
Total	341	1965	797	283	104	3490

4.4.4 Pilot Study

In the initial stages of the research process (2011), a pilot study was conducted. Focus groups were used, as they are an efficient way in which to refine questions and gather

data (Robson, 2002), allow the unexpected to surface, and ensure that a researcher's biases and assumptions are identified and diluted (Kreuger & Casey, 2009). They allow the researcher exposure to the targeted population and insight into the beliefs and experiences of participants (Kreuger et al., 2009). A combination of purposive and convenience sampling (De Vaus, 2002) was used to recruit participants (n=20). Three focus groups were formed based on awareness of not having too big or too small a group to impede discussion (Bloor, 2001) and also with regard to the availability of participants at particular times. Sampling is a core concern in research design and is a crucial factor in the analysis of data; where people are sourced, how and why they were selected, all impact on the conclusions that can be drawn (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this instance, as the focus group sessions were being used to inform the study regarding the concerns, experiences and expectations of mature students with a view to identifying themes to guide the next stage of the research (rather than merely what I thought to be the concerns, experiences and expectations of mature students) it was necessary to extrapolate a wide array of viewpoints and experiences during this initial phase. In the recruitment stage contact was made through several gatekeepers (mature student officers, executive officers within Schools and personal acquaintances). Contact with willing participants was initiated in person, by phone or email. Invitations to participate were sent via email to prospective participants (Appendix 1). If they indicated an intention to attend, a reminder phone call or email was sent prior to the event.

4.4.5 Sampling strategy for focus groups

Purposive and convenience sampling was used to target a particular group of people (former mature students who had graduated) in order that they would convene and discuss the research issue of post graduate experiences of mature individuals (De Vaus, 2002). In choosing participants for focus groups, the facilitator has to take into account homogeneous and heterogeneous considerations. Too homogeneous a group may result in adherence to consensus and lack of novel interaction, too heterogeneous and communication may be contentious and disrespectful. Size matters, too large a group may result in the topic not being fully addressed as everyone needs to input, or voices going unheard due to the quieter nature of some individuals (Robson 2002, Krueger et al., 2009). In planning the groups it was decided to have as heterogeneous a mix as possible within each group in order to extrapolate a wide array of viewpoints and experiences, to provoke lively debate and avoid group think (Robson, 2002). In practise, this aim was tempered by the availability of individuals on any given evening. By including those who had undergone a third level education in different institutions under a variety of social and cultural conditions it was expected that:

(a) unexpected factors may surface, (b) the constraints of the author's opinions and beliefs would be diluted, (c) it could establish whether there were similarities in issues across time and conditions that could be captured to inform subsequent stages of the research, (d) identify themes that could be used to inform planning of subsequent stages of the research process.

4.4.6 Composition of focus groups

There were twenty participants representing degree awards of B.A, B.Sc and BAI (table 4.2) spread across three focus groups. Meetings took place in the evening times in the same venue in Trinity College and lasted between one and a half and two hours. Participants were given consent forms to sign and participation information sheets (appendices 2, 3) which outlined the study, possible use of information and confidentiality assurances. The group process was an interactive discussion between participants which was facilitated by the researcher and a co-facilitator. To meet the aims of the study a topic guide had been developed (appendix 4). A guide is useful in that it affords "focus" on the topic, otherwise it would just be a discussion among individuals (Robson, 2002). This guide was arranged to facilitate discussion in the event that conversation did not flow and contained prompts of identical questions phrased in different manners[36]. It was not the intention to ask all these repetitive questions; rather they were a type of "ready reckoner" that myself and my co-facilitator could refer to quickly if the focus group sessions were not proceeding dynamically. However, all the focus groups worked well as "social performances" (Clifford & Hardiman 1986:16) with individuals willing to narrate their personal experiences, and test their interpretations of events with others, resulting in a "polyvocal production" (Gross 1996:5). At frequent stages throughout each session, the facilitator introduced assurances about confidentiality and was particularly careful to reiterate these prior of completion of the exit survey and scale. At the close of each

[36] Example of questions on focus group topic guide: Were there things you could not do because you did not have a degree? Can you remember how you felt the first few days? Did you expect to benefit financially?

session participants were asked to complete an exit survey, in the form of a brief questionnaire, incorporating demographic material, and giving an opportunity for feedback and suggestions of items for inclusion in future focus groups (appendix 5). Light refreshments were served at each session. The co-facilitator was employed to audit sessions and completed some brief field notes, thus providing a consistency check with regard to the facilitator's interpretation of emergent themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985. The facilitator and co facilitator conferred post sessions. All sessions were taped and transcribed. Transcriptions were analysed and emergent themes noted: Historical, Decision making process, Transformative, Personal returns, Social support, Supporting factors, College experience, Age, Status, Post College and Value of Degree. These themes informed the development of an interview schedule for the next stage of the research. Each focus group was run as an individual unit and as such, the themes uncovered and the issues explored, or indeed the themes not covered and issues unexplored, served to inform the next focus group. The purpose of the exit questionnaire was not only to collect some demographic material from each participant, but to incorporate some sensitive questions about finance which may not have been answered appropriately if posed during the session, and also to give the respondents an opportunity to evaluate the session and allow for a snowballing technique to populate further sessions.

Table 4-2: Distribution of focus group sample participants.

	BA	BSc	BAI	Total
Focus group one				
Male	2			
Female	5	1		8
Focus group two				
Male	2			
Female	4			6
Focus group three				
Male	1		1	
Female	4			6
Total	18	1	1	20

As the researcher, I facilitated the meetings myself. Being a mature graduate of Trinity College was somewhat advantageous in terms of gaining access and encouraging openness. However it also demanded diligence in ensuring sufficient probing of the subject matter to avoid assumptions of shared understanding (Kamenou 2007) which may prove erroneous or induce bias. As an additional safeguard a co facilitator was employed to audit the sessions. All sessions were taped using an Olympus digital voice recorder VN-5500PC, and a MIKOMI ICR-602. Following on from the focus group sessions a thank you email was sent to each participant together with a general invitation and a request to forward this to any one they thought might be interested in participating at a future date.

4.4.7 Focus group session practice

The purpose of these sessions was to uncover themes that would inform the next phase of the study. Having been a mature student myself, I had to be mindful as facilitator that my opinions and experiences would not influence either the sessions or the subsequent analysis. Therefore use of the Delphi technique[37] (Robson, 2002) was initially considered. However, this approach was eventually rejected in favour of using a topic guide within the broad parameters of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and employing a co-facilitator. The narrative was led by the groups but the topic guide contained some prompt questions as a personal guide in the event that the group dynamic faltered.

Each session began with a short exercise, where the participants wrote down three or four answers in response to a question (table 4.3). The answers were gathered and transcribed onto a flip chart for discussion midway through the session. These opening exercise questions are listed below. This exercise was adopted to tap into the immediacy of responses prior to the possibility of conformity to group norms and to avoid highlighting any power or status differences (Krueger et al., 2009). The fact that the answers were written rather than spoken and not discussed immediately appeared to have an engrossing effect on the participants.

[37] Delphi technique refers to a manner of idea generation, whereby a group generates ideas by putting forward as many opinions as possible on the issue in hand without being guided by a topic guide or survey (Robson, 2002).

Table 4-3: Opening questions for each focus group session

Focus group session	Exercise question
22nd March 2011	What were your motivations in going to university?
28th march 2011	Name four things that you have achieved as a result of going to university.
14th April 2011	What were your goals when you decided to go to university?

The next question was common to all groups whereby the participants were asked to introduce themselves and say what course they had done and when they had done it. A second exercise common to all focus groups was conducted in the latter half of the sessions. Participants were asked to list any type of occupation that they might have held since completing their undergraduate degrees. These would have included voluntary positions, temporary, contract and permanent positions and work in the private or public sector. At this stage, participants were again reminded of confidentiality and told that this was an exercise to promote discussion and that they need only contribute as much or as little information as made them comfortable. As facilitator, I contributed to this exercise by listing the occupations that I have held since completing my undergraduate degree. These would have included a range of occupations including some of low occupational ranking. It is not usual for the facilitator to contribute to the proceedings, and the decision to do so was not made lightly. It was based on the knowledge that the participants were aware of the nature of the study, my background as researcher and that some may not have had what they

might have considered as degree appropriate careers. It was also regarded as an exemplar in redressing the charge of power imbalance that can be levelled as a disadvantage of focus group sessions (Robson 2002). In the final quarter of the sessions, as part of a cooling down stage, the list of answers to the first exercise was revealed to the participants and they were discussed generally. This return to the opening exercise proved effective in drawing the sessions to a close (Krueger et al., 2009).

4.4.8 Life history interviews

This phase drew upon the findings of the focus group sessions. The thematic analysis of the pilot study had highlighted themes that were of importance to mature students, and these themes were incorporated into a semi-structured interview guide prompt (appendix 6). Authors differ as to what determines a semi-structured interview; some include an unstructured approach, others include flexibility as to the order of questioning, some require the exact same question to be asked of each participant in the same order, others allow the same questions to be asked in any order (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). For this research, an interview guide was developed reflecting the themes that arose in the pilot study and the research questions prompting the study. Mindful that the purpose of a qualitative interview:

> Is not to put things in someone's mind (for example, the interviewer's preconceived categories for organising the world) but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. (Patton, 1990:278)

These questions were only used as a guide for the interviewer, to aid in having key points addressed and to allow the novel to emerge. The interview took the form of a conversation with the narrative led by the interviewee. A life history approach, using case studies, was adopted for these interviews as it casts a spotlight on the subjective perception of phenomena and contributes to the field of enquiry regarding why individual people, with various combinations of social and personal experiences, make particular decisions and act in particular ways. Life histories are a particular type of autobiographical research approach that locates a life story in its historical context (Goodson, 1992) which is appropriate for this thesis, which is concerned with exploring the manner in which an individual exercises agency and in a sense makes their own history, but is also mindful of the fact that this happens through their interactions with social structure.

4.4.9 Sampling strategy for life history interviews

At this stage in the research, the ongoing negotiations for access to the student records had been finalised and access had been permitted. The data set was annoymised and made available by the supervisor. The data set of mature students for the time period 1995-2005 consisted of N=3490, M=2166 (following screening and cleaning, refer to section 4.4.3, table 4.1, earlier in this chapter). Based on age and gender across faculty a sample was selected using SPSS exact sampling technique. Overall three issues of invitations to participate were made over the course of the study. The first issue comprised of forty invitations (appendix 7) asking selected

individuals to participate in this study. There were eight positive responses (response rate 20%). A second issue of forty invitations resulted in 12 positive responses (response rate 30%) and a third issue of forty invitations resulted in six positive responses (response rate 15%). In total twenty four interviews took place. Of the two interviews that did not proceed, one individual was overseas and the other individual was quite elderly and prevaricated over time and place and ultimately involvement in the process. Respondents came from a Health Science, Humanities and Engineering and Science background.

4.4.10 Interview session practise

The interviews took place in either Trinity College or in the respondent's own premises (2012, 2014). One took place in a quiet corner of a hotel lobby. Light refreshments were served to those who were interviewed in Trinity and a modest box of chocolates brought to those who were interviewed at home. At the start of the interviews participants were given the participant information and consent forms (appendices 8, 9), which were signed before the interview began. They were also asked if they would write down their aims in coming to college. Purists may argue that the use of a writing exercise in a qualitative interview is not in keeping with the genre. However, the reason for doing so was to isolate the thought and then see if a similar thread could be recognised running through the interview. It was also used as a tool to reduce responder bias as it gives the interviewee a chance to collect his/her thoughts while they get used to the space and place of the interview, whilst tea/coffee was being made, and also engages the declarative part of the brain, whereas the act of thinking

and reasoning engages the frontal lobes primarily. Four interviewees commented that they would have to think about their aims and one commented that he knew straight away. Interviews varied in duration, with most lasting between one and half to two hours. All of the interviewees were happy to talk and needed little encouragement. Two went off on tangents entirely outside the remit of the study and in these instances, the interview guide (appendix 6) was useful in drawing them back into the process. One interviewee got extremely upset and I offered to terminate the interview, and inquired as to whether there was anyone that I could call for him. He was very clear that he wanted to continue the interview and we proceeded, checking periodically as to his continued willingness to be interviewed. I reported the incident to my supervisor and I contacted him the following day to ensure that he was not suffering any ill effects from the interview. At the end of all the interviews, participants were thanked and asked to complete a very short survey (appendix 10) which collected demographic material and had some open ended questions to facilitate those who might have found some issues too sensitive to discuss (O'Leary, 2004). However, this was not taken up to any large degree with most participants leaving this section blank. Nevertheless this was regarded as an attempt to address the power relationship between researcher and researched (Gouthro 2012) and in facilitating those who might be less verbal thus providing another layer by which to inform the study. All interviews were taped and the tapes transcribed for analysis.

4.5 Data analysis of life history interviews.

Analysis of qualitative data involves ordering the disorderly and elucidating the findings in such a way as makes sense to readers (Ritchie et al., 2003). In this study it involved adapting an iterative approach to reading the transcripts in order to identify shared and individual experiences and themes emerging from the narrative. Data reduction is a necessary and integral element of qualitative analysis and must be done in such a way as not to diminish the integrity of the stories the participants shared whilst acknowledging the reflexivity of the researcher (Ritchie et al., 2003). All interview sessions were taped and then transcribed. To ensure close reading of all of the data, grounded theory was used in analysing the data. This involved coding line by line of each text, drawing out concepts and themes. Glaser and Strauss, (1967) suggest that grounded theory should be used in a pure form, uncontaminated from pre-existing theoretical approaches in order to allow theory to grow from the narratives of the individuals. However, using grounded theory as an analytic tool in addition to drawing on existing theories can provide rich insight into the subject matter (Merrill and West, 2009). The line by line coding approach is useful in ensuring that subtextual data is not overlooked[38]. In addition, peer auditing sessions were organised, in order to conduct consistency checks with the researcher's interpretations of emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

[38] For example, mention had been made by Anthony of having a dysfunctional family, line by line coding enabled subtext to evolve in terms of neglect due to alcoholism, rather than intentional abuse as was the case with Seansher who stated his father was abusive and tyrannical.

A spreadsheet was created with each interviewee on the y axis and the themes identified on the x axis. As each text was coded each interviewee was added to the spreadsheet. As subthemes were identified they were added to the spreadsheet and then the preceding analysed texts would be revisited, these themes are listed in appendix 11. The use of grounded theory is an iterative process with frequent revisiting of texts. The themes to have emerged include: education route, education amount, life-cycle, hierarchical power, life-trajectory, university journey, family of origin, adult family, friends, social norms, influential others, developing self. As an example of subthemes, those that emerged for the theme 'Friends' included: interaction with friends when young, support of 'outside friends when going to college', opinion of friends when going to college, loyalty of friends, loyalty to friends, making friends in college, keeping friends from college, mixing both sets of friends, importance of social group. The data analysis was arranged in four findings chapters: Early years, Bridging years, College years and Post College years. The analysis pertinent to the development of each chapter is offered in the following sections. Each chapter was nuanced so as to explore the relationship between the findings of the analysis and the conceptual framework.

4.5.1 Data analysis pertinent to the Early Years chapter

The aim in this chapter was to explore the formative years of the participants and the years they spent as young adults and so build up a picture of their lives in their families of origin and their adult families. This was done in order to gain insight into the importance of education within their families and social milieu and to gain insight into the advantages and disadvantages attributed to social background. Demographic surveys and reports by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) reveal patterns of participation which are dominated by individuals from higher social class or socio

economic backgrounds. Undoubtedly useful and informative in giving the broadstroke picture of demographic heterogeneity, this approach does not lend itself to probing the nuances and intricacies that underlie these patterns. In addition, two separate social background classifications populate reports, social class and socio economic group (appendix 12) each with a slightly different remit, which are on occasion blended in reports and given the title of social class background (Darmody, Smyth, O'Connell, Williams &Ryan 2005:22). Whilst the difference between both classifications is discrete, for the purposes of this thesis it is nonetheless important. Social class has been defined as:

> The entire population is also classified into one of the following social class groups (introduced in 1996) which are defined on the basis of occupation...The occupations included in each of these groups have been selected in such a way as to bring together, as far as possible, people with similar levels of occupational skill. In determining social class no account is taken of the differences between individuals on the basis of other characteristics such as education. Accordingly social class ranks occupations by the level of skill required on a social class scale ranging from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest)... This scale combines occupations into six groups by occupation and employment status following procedures similar to those...for the allocation of socio economic group.
>
> (CSO 1996, appendix 2:116-117)

Socio economic group has been defined as:

> The entire population was classified into one of ten specific socio-economic groups (introduced in 1996). In addition a residual group entitled "all others gainfully occupied and unknown" was used where sufficient details were not provided. The classification aims to bring together persons with similar social and economic statuses on the basis of the level of skill or educational attainment required. In defining socio-economic group no attempt is made to rank groups in order of socio-economic importance....Persons on home duties or at school/college, who are members of a family unit, were classified to the socio-economic group of the person in the family on whom they were deemed to be dependent. Thus, if the head of the family was at work, unemployed or retired, dependent persons were assigned to his/her socio-economic group. (Central Statistics Office, CSO, 1996, appendix 2:116-117)

Whereas social class is a ranking system dependent on skills required to complete an occupation, socio-economic group is not regarded as a ranking system. Yet socio economic group classification pays cognisance to both the skill and education required for an occupation, in addition to the social and economic status that would be associated with that particular occupation. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, in particular this chapter, which is exploring associations between education and social

mobility, the SEG classification will be used rather than that of social class, as it is offers a more in-depth and appropriate definition on which to build the study.

Having the SEG of the "head of family" bestows on those individuals the same social and economic status associated with the skills and education appropriate to that required by the head of family in his/her occupation. It does not pay any cognisance to other skills and education and other social and economic status that the individual may have been exposed to in the family of origin. This chapter attempts to populate a social background frame by moving beyond the head of family SEG and incorporating the SEG of the other parent in the family of origin and the SEG of the partners/spouses in this sample. It does so in order to mine data on whether, or to what extent, there was exposure within the family background to other SEG influences, and as a consequence, other skill sets, education levels and associated social and economic statuses. Table 5.1 (appendix 13) tracks the social background of the participants and includes details of parents' occupations, own work history, and spousal/partner's work history if appropriate. It was necessary to explore the social background of the participants as it was an important facet of this study, as the dominant theoretical paradigm guiding the thesis was Hopper's theory of social mobility.

In this chapter I also sought to establish the key characteristics of the sample in terms of their orientations towards higher education. As a first step, a table of dispersion (table 5.7, appendix 14) was devised which listed their pseudonyms, faculties, degree type, award level, age when qualified, year of qualification and the total amount of years spent studying for the undergraduate degree. The next step was to record the

aims this cohort had in coming to college, these formed part of table 5.8 (aims-results) which also recorded the following: the resulting non/employment experiences post college attendance, and any additional studies undertaken (appendix 15). These tables were pertinent to exploring the efficacy of theoretical propositions that were used in interpreting the data. For instance, Hopper's theory refers to goal orientations, and social and educational policies refer to up-skilling individuals for the marketplace. Tabling the orientations facilitated building a knowledge base regarding the match (if any) between orientations and outcomes.

Building on this social background framework, the analysis was developed to explore the educational amount of individuals (rather than their credentialised level), in order to probe the extent to which links could be made between social class background and education. This approach draws on the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 2001) which holds that liking (affect) a subject or an event is influenced by exposure to it rather than thinking about it (cognition). Using the social background framework to explore other SEGs the sample may have been exposed to, cast a lens on nuances that a focus on credentialism often masks, by highlighting the exposure the individual has had to formal education in addition to reasons for lack of credentialisation. This was done by modifying CASMIN to better examine the amount of education an individual was exposed to rather than the level of qualification that they attained.

4.5.2 CASMIN classification and modifications

CASMIN classification, as described by Whelan, C, T. & Layte, R., (2004) is a useful guide for both social class and education schema. For the purposes of the Whelan and Layte report (ibid) the original eight categories were reduced to four to better suit the Irish educational field. This modification reflecting the Irish system of education was useful in that it enabled Whelan et al., (2004) to reflect on associations of social class and education qualifications with respect to nationally representative samples of males from 1970s to 2000.

Table 4-4: CASMIN as modified by Whelan & Layte, 2004

CASMIN	Irish education equivalent (W&L, 2004)
Primary or less(1a,1b,1c)	Primary certificate or no qualification
Lower Secondary (2a, 2b)	Group or Intermediate Certificate
Higher Secondary (2c)	Leaving Certificate or equivalent
Tertiary (3a,3b)	Any post second level qualification at sub degree, primary or higher degree level.

Using this approach they were able to reflect on the changing occupational landscape where substantial class structural changes were evident, for example jobs in agriculture diminished and Ireland moved towards becoming a post industrial society. For this thesis, I modified CASMIN further to capture the amount of education the sample had received, rather than the level of qualification that they had received (table 5.3). The sample was then grouped according to the amount of education they

had attained and the era in which their education had taken place (table 5.4). Following on from this, patterns of education attainment, SEG of origin and SEG as adult prior to coming to college were tracked in table 5.5. This enabled a view as to what extent the participants in each attainment group had experienced social mobility prior to coming to Trinity as mature students.

The next step in the analysis, was to focus on the personal experiences that may have contributed to an individual's regard for and non/continuance in education, in terms of influences within the intimate sphere of the family, peers and school system. Scripts were also interrogated for reference to behaviour that the participant had identified as negative or bullying. If one teacher, one peer, or one parent had been identified in this manner than, that teacher, peer, or parent is regarded as toxic. If the participant did not proceed in his/her education, then the parallel relationship between the life-trajectory and the life-cycle would be violated. This led to the tentative development of a decoupling model of parallel progression which identified toxic agents within the intimate sphere (figure 5.1, table 5.6). This model is presented as a tentative model as it has only been possible to build with reference to this small sample.

4.5.3 Data analysis pertinent to the Bridging Years chapter

The focus in this chapter was on the time prior to going to college when decisions were being made to go to university, the factors that prompted these decisions and the orientations of the sample in choosing to do their degree courses. In using grounded theory technique to analyse each script and to aid in identifying key concepts, it

became clear that there were distinct similarities between certain participants and their orientations towards education. These were interpreted and expressed as typologies (table 6.1).

Typologies are "classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspect of the world into parts along a continuum" (Patton,2002:457). Alheit & Merrill., (2001) have adopted a similar approach in identifying educational biographies (patchworker, climber, integrator, emancipator, and careerist) as part of a cross national study on adult participation in education. Noted in this seminal work was that careerists seem to be most prominent in Ireland:

> Extremely pretentious. They enter university for prestige or financial reasons. They are extrinsically motivated as academic studies are an instrument to reach a goal or earn more money. Their study plans are economic. The prognosis for study is positive. (Alheit et al., 2001:3)

The typologies built on the work of Alheit et al., (2001) and sought to bring together collections of people of different ages, social backgrounds and levels of education and to help describe the commonalities in the orientations of this sample towards education. The dimensions of the typologies, for this thesis, were checked and defined through frequent iterations of the transcriptions and formed the basis for the discrimination between each category (Ritchie et al., 2003).

In developing typologies resultant on the data analysis of the interviews for this thesis, it was possible to further refine the categories of individuals, layering subtleties and identifying four typologies; (1) Strategists, (2) Fulfilment seekers, (3) Transformationalists and (4) Builders. These typologies will be elaborated upon in chapter six of this thesis. However, succinctly, Strategists would be the most similar to the Careerists identified by Alheit et al., (2001) in the sense that they were extrinsically motivated with a precise goal in mind and choosing a specific university course as a conduit to achieving these goals. Strategists were specific in their intentions to do particular courses to engage in particular careers and set goals accordingly. All were occupationally orientated. Fulfilment seekers and Transformationalists are moving into education from a sense of something lacking in their life, this being more situated in negativity for transformationalists. Whilst neither group is adverse to gaining work once finished university, they were not as occupationally goal focused as Strategists. Fulfilment seekers were more likely to view education as having an additive value in their lives, whilst transformationalists saw it as an opportunity to change negative aspects of their lives. Builders, in a sense, had a wholesome approach to the pursuit of education, not starting from a deficit point, being happy enough with their current lives, but rather using the opportunity to build on their own repertoires. All groups comprise of individuals from a variety of social backgrounds and different ages.

4.5.4 Data analysis of the University Years chapter

This chapter delves into the experiences of this cohort during their years in university and draws on group theory in analysis of the data. To better understand the

experiences of the sample based on their stories of their time in college, the findings of this chapter were built into the concept of a college community. This college community (figure 7.1) was represented by four possible groups: formal, supportive, informal and semiformal,. Each individual script was revisited and the positive and negative comments and nuances regarding interaction of each individual with each group were noted. These were plotted against each group quadrant. These then informed on the degrees of choice that participants exercised in terms of the levels of structural rigidity within each group.

4.5.5 Data analysis of the Postgraduate Years chapter

In this chapter, the outcomes of attaining a graduate degree are viewed through a prism of economic, social and personal returns. As a starting point the stated aims of the sample were revisited and compared with the outcomes to see how efficacious the college journey was in terms of meeting those aims (table 5.8, appendix 15) , then the social mobility table (appendix 13) was revisited. The purpose of this was to examine the extent to which social mobility as theorised by Hopper had occurred. Attention was then focused on exploring the employment experiences of the sample in order to see the extent to which those employed participants thought that their degree was related to their employment. This was done by attending to the appropriate sections of transcripts and noting reference to differentials in public and private sector employment, opinion as to the importance of their own network of contacts in getting a job, and influence of previous skill sets. The analysis went further in ascertaining the variables in the employment itself, for instance whether those employed were happy

with their salary rates, were happy with benefits such as autonomy in their work, and also registered the negative, those who were unhappy with their employment conditions and those who were unhappy with broader education and employment structure. Examining the personal returns of the sample was done by interrogating the transcripts for evidence of personal satisfaction and appreciation and changes in personal habits. Social returns were explored by seeking references made by the participants to the extent they felt that their new knowledge and skills could be of benefit to their families, organisations to which they were committed or had an interest in, and to the wider community. Analysis of transcripts for this chapter highlighted an outcome which had been unanticipated; the extent to which many of the sample (n=15) engaged in additional levels of education post degree level. This was for 11/15 an unintended consequence of their degree education, brought about by interest in their degree subject matter, and/or a belief that further education was needed to gain employment. However, this presented a problem in the data analysis as it was not clear whether to include further education as a social, personal or economic return. Having revisited the research questions, I made the decision to include additional education as a personal return on the grounds that for most of the individuals, it was only through having experienced an undergraduate education that the notion of continuing with further study came about, therefore even if it was to result in additional economic return, it was primarily based on development of a personal discernment towards education.

4.6 Personal Issues with the research

A feature of qualitative research is the need to create a comfortable safe environment and have good social interaction between the researcher and the participants. A researcher has to be mindful of the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched, the possibilities of responder bias to the researcher, and the impact of location on the process of the interview sessions (Robson, 2011). I will discuss the steps that I took to minimise to address these issues.

Firstly, in considering the social aspect of space and place, participants were given the choice of coming into Trinity for the interview, or having it in a place of their choosing. As they had attended Trinity as mature students I considered it unlikely that they would be intimidated by participating in the interviews in college. However, I gave all participants a choice of coming in to college or conducting the interviews in their own homes. If I was conducting the interviews in the homes of participants, as a safety precaution, I left details of the address (not the house number) and the time of the interview with a colleague and in my desk diary. I kept the name of the participant anonymous; however my supervisor had the name and the full address, in the event of any problems.

Following on, I formed the opinion that a personal interview for research purposes is, in a sense, an artificial situation; the participant is in a position of power in that they elect to respond to the request and can withdraw their support at any time, without the voluntary co-operation of the participant the researcher has no study to proceed

with. However, ~~by~~ agreeing to participate in a personal interview, particularly a life history interview (which engages reflections of the whole of the individual's life), with a stranger who can ask probing questions about the person's story shifts the balance of power somewhat. I attempted to create a comfortable situation from the outset. In the office where the interviews took place, two comfortable chairs were placed either side of a small table with water, fruit, savouries and sweet biscuits. After welcoming the participant, I offered him/her a seat, engaged in some casual conversation, and offered them tea or coffee. Whilst making the tea/coffee I gave them the participant information forms and the consent forms and turned the conversation around towards the research study. I showed them the tape recorders that I used and told them how they worked and then explained how I would be proceeding with the study. I emphasised that they did not have to talk about anything that made them uncomfortable. Most interviews lasted between one and a half to two hours. One lasted three and a half hours. Good practise would have all interviews last approximately the same amount of time. However, my thinking was that every individual will tell their story in their own way and in their own time, and that if someone needed extra time I should give it to them. The one participant who took a lengthy time (in excess of three hours) appeared unwell and in need of telling her story and I felt it incumbent on me to give her the time she required. A second way in which I attempted to address any issue of power imbalance was to share part of my own story, in terms of telling them that I had been a mature student myself. On this point, I had to be mindful that I would not project my own prejudices and experiences on the interview, so I was careful to offer information on myself, in the most neutral manner possible. However, i felt that my experiences as an "insider" helped me to understand

the complexities and nuances that were part of their life histories. I tried to strike a balance between being professional and being relaxed, so that conversation would flow. As is normal practise, all participants signed a consent form which detailed the study and their right to withdraw. I also gave them a participant information sheet with similar details, so that they could refer to this at home if they were reflecting on the interview. I also said that they could contact me afterwards if they had any questions or concerns.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter builds on the conceptual chapter, detailing the methodology in terms of the decision making process and the design of the study. As a starting point, the objectives and the research questions are recounted. Then pertinent details of the literature review and conceptual chapters are summarised in the methodological overview. The research design was then discussed in terms of reviewing the decision making process. Following on the procedure was detailed in stages, firstly discussing the access negotiation and sampling strategy, and then the pilot study conducted in the early stages of the research, the sampling strategy, and the composition and practise of the focus groups. In the next part of the chapter, the life histories were detailed in a similar fashion. In discussing the data analysis of the life history interview transcripts, a general overview is presented followed by a description of data analysis pertaining to each of four findings chapters. The chapter was drawn to a close by highlighting personal issues pertaining to the research.

5 Chapter Five-Early Years

5.1 Introduction

As argued earlier in this thesis, attendance at third level institutions normatively follows on from second level schooling for the majority of individuals. In Ireland, 55% of school leavers are progressing directly into higher education (HEA, 2008). The typical third level full time student is single with no children, 22 years of age, with 67% pursuing a primary degree (ibid). This facilitates the parallel progression of the life-cycles and life trajectories for most people. A key question in approaching this research was to explore why adult individuals chose to use education as a means to effect change at this particular stage in their lives. This prompts a second, important question: if they are able to do so now, why did they not do so at an earlier, normative stage in their lives? Many research tracts have addressed this secondary question by reference to the advantages and disadvantages attributed to social background, and the manner in which social background constrains or promotes educational progression[39]. The purpose of this chapter is firstly, to consider the key characteristics of the sample in terms of their orientation, i.e. their intentions and their motivations towards education, in particular higher education. I will do this by exploring this association within the context of their family and their experiences as adults prior to successful entry into their degree courses in Trinity. More specifically I shall discuss findings related to: 1) mapping their intergenerational SEG background, 2) the notion

[39] For detail, refer to chapter two.

of parallel progression, explained by Hopper (1981) as a person's life-cycle and life-trajectory travelling along parallel pathways and the contribution of education to this endeavour. Attention is paid to the agents (school, family, peers) who exist within the social milieu of the individual and consideration given to their contribution with respect to progression. This information has formed the basis for a tentative model build regarding the influences on "derailing" parallel progression, in terms of engendering in the individual a lack of faith regarding their own educational prowess. In the final section of this chapter, evidence of the relationship between power and gender, as recounted by respondents, is explored through the lens of prime attachment figures and the role they play in perpetuating social norms.

5.2 Socio-Economic Groups (SEGs)

> Occupations are the single most important source of various kinds of economic, status and political power. (Hopper et al., 1975:18)

It has been well documented (Bourdieu et al., 1977; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Giddens, 1991; Weber & Henderson, 2012; Wright, 1997) that different levels of education 'route' people into specific occupations within the labour market. Occupations are placed on a value system with respect to economic and status hierarchies. Therefore, if an individual travels a particular education route from an early stage in life, by virtue of being in a particular social space, that lessens, or indeed, enhances their chances of optimal reward by way of occupational eligibility, then the

educational system is acting as a successful agent of social control (Bourdieu et al., 1977; Hopper, 1981; Hopper et al., 1975). Grouping people by social class or by socio economic status, suggests a replication of a value system and opportunity system associated with the interactions of education, expectation, opportunity and occupation[40].

[40] The SEG classification guide used in Ireland is compliant with the international occupation classification ISCO Com(88) and is included in appendices.

Table 5-1: Tracking lifetime membership of SEG (extract from full table in appendices)

Name	Father's occupation(s)	SEG	Mother's occupation(s)	SEG	Own pre * Occupation(s)	SEG	Spouse/Partner's occupation(s)	SEG	Own post *occupations	SEG
Fianna	Trucker	E	Housewife Part-time tailoress	E E	Clerk:- trucking company established company Trade union employee	 D D C	Trade union employee	C	Trade union various policy roles	C
Annie	Painter	E	Housewife	E	Clerk Housewife and fulltime	D C	Technician	C	Unemployed Volunteer in adult ed.,	

					mother					
Ray	Shoe salesman (own business)	A	Housewife, Secretary	A D	Disability service nurse	C	Housewife and full time mother Nurse, Counsellor	C C C	Tenured Lecturer	B
Mildred	Shop owner	A	Co-owner	A	Executive Officer	C	n/a	n/a	Retired	C

(*) refers to pre TCD attendance and post graduation.

5.2.1 Exploring lifetime membership of Socio-Economic Groups

The social background framework that has been developed (extract offered, full table 5.1 in appendix) documents the occupations of the fathers and mothers of the respondents in addition to their own occupations and that of any spouses/partners, in order to pay cognisance to any additional SEGs that may have come into the respondent's adult family life. The purpose of table 5:2 is to facilitate a focused view on the SEGs that each respondent would have been exposed to within the intimate social sphere of family life.

If SEG is supposed to reflect discrete levels of education associated with occupations, then this exercise could contribute to identifying shifts in SEG and to exploring reasons for this shift or lack of shift. Table 5:2 was devised as a 'best possible fit' based on the descriptions given by participants in this study. In viewing the occupations and SEG of both parents (family of origin), there is representation across the range of SEG with the exception of agricultural workers and own account workers.

5.2.1.1 Socioeconomic Group of Fathers and Mothers of Participants

Table 5-2: Tracking SEG of Fathers and Mothers of Respondents (N=24)

SEG	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Z
Father	5	2	2	5	5	-	2	-	1	-	2
Mother based on marriage *	2	1	2	2	4	-	1	-	1	-	2
Mother – self	2			4	2	1					

***Mother through marriage refers to wives gaining their husband's SEG if they are unemployed themselves. Mother-self refers to the SEG status of the occupations of mothers working outside the home.**

Table 5.2 offers an abridged version of SEG background, focusing on the mothers' and fathers' SEG. In viewing fathers' SEGs, there is no representation of F (semi-skilled workers), H (own account workers) and J (agricultural workers). Mothers who did not work outside the home assumed the SEG of their husbands through marriage[41]. In one instance, a respondent (Marymau) spoke of her father having had two jobs, one in the army and afterwards becoming involved in the family construction business. Whilst telling her story, she spoke at length about her early years, her father's absence in the army, and the positive influence of her grandparents, particularly her grandmother, in

[41] Traditionally, women were accorded the status of their spouse as marriage was seen as a 'destination' and thus they achieved the social position based on their spouse's occupation. In the present day, those unemployed (male or female) within a household assume the social position of the head of household. (CSO,1996)

her upbringing and her adult life. As she believes that these were highly influential years, her father's SEG from his army years has been recorded. Ursula had both a father and stepfather, both of whom belonged to the same SEG. It was only necessary therefore to record the one occupation.

There were nine instances where mothers were assigned their own SEG as they engaged in paid employment. In seven of those instances these mothers (of Kate, Monamon, Ursula, Mildred, Sheila, Kevin and Rita), would have worked more or less constantly during their formative years. The other two instances were occasions where the respondents' mothers worked at a later stage in their development or intermittently; Ray's mother took up work as a secretary when her children began to grow more independent. Fianna's mother worked regularly throughout her formative years however she stressed that this was in a temporary capacity. Of those with their own SEGs two were involved in business with their husbands (A), one was a landlady (D), three worked in the service industry or doing clerical work (D), one was a butcher, another a tailoress (E) and one worked as a laundrywoman (F). Of those who were employed one was in a higher SEG than her husband (table 5.1- appendix) and six were in the same SEG.

5.2.2 Heterogeneity

The data presented in table 5.2 suggests that, as with the broader population of students, those with fathers in SEG A (employers and managers) form a significant portion of this sample, as is often reported on studies regarding the constituency of

the student body general (for example, Darmody et al., 2005). However, what is not consistent with Darmody et al's., (2005) findings is that those from non manual or manual skilled origins (D&E) also represent a significant proportion of the sample which would not be the pattern in the student body general (for example, Senior Lecturer's reports TCD,1995/1996-2007/2008). This could suggest that the aspirations for a more diverse student body as articulated in various White and Green papers, whilst not being attained by a younger cohort of students, is being addressed and attained by older individuals.

Another factor to note, which became evident in collating tables 5.2 and 5.4, is the heterogeneity evident within SEGs, in terms of occupations, which would have a ripple effect of status and economic reward offered in addition to the education needed to hold those positions. For instance, Kate's father was a police officer. Any police officer of the rank inspector and above would be classified as SEG A; this would encompass six grades of officer, each grade requiring some difference in levels of skill and education, in addition to having different levels of social and economic status. In this sample, five individuals had fathers who owned businesses and were employers, therefore classified as SEG A. Yet again, there was heterogeneity in terms of the size of the businesses, the payroll, the education needed to conduct same, and the status and economic benefits associated with each venture.

Moving on to the participants' own occupational careers prior to coming to Trinity, some trajectories exhibited a chequered career path with movement up and down SEGs. For instance, Kate worked as a language teacher, an office worker, a Garda and

a housewife prior to entering her degree programme. Others changed jobs but stayed in the same broad occupation. This was evident in terms of office work, which was a commonly cited occupation for a number of females in the study. In some cases, situs[42] was valued, if not especially by the respondent, then by the parents of the respondent. For example, Fianna's mother was happy that she moved from a private company into a governmental office job. Three individuals moved one rank up or down from their first recorded employment ranking SEG in their career history prior to coming to Trinity as mature students. Kate and Tash had the most ranking diversity, Kate moved through three SEGS (C, D, A) and Tash moved through three SEGs also (F,D,C). Seventeen participants remained within one SEG, one individual, Seansher had been unemployed and another participant, Tara, only discussed her community activism.

5.2.3 Comparing participant's SEG as adults (pre-college) with their SEG of origin

What was notable in this group, was regardless of whether there was a family firm or a particular profession or trade, in the family of origin, this was not adopted by the respondent. Given the notion of intergenerational transfer of knowledge, prestige and status (Hansen, 2001), it is somewhat surprising that this group does not exhibit evidence of the business/trade/profession of the parents being adopted by their children. However, this must be interpreted with caution, bearing in mind that it was a relatively small sample that participated in this research. There are two exceptions to

[42] Hopper's concept of situs has been described in chapter three. Briefly situs is the term given to describe the same job type attracting different status, depending on the environment in which the job is conducted.

this finding; Kate and Fianna. Kate's father was in the Gardai, in the years following her finishing school, the rules were changed to allow females become gardai. When Kate's father told her of this originally she was against joining up, but after a spell working in a travel firm she decided to apply:

> my father sent me a letter saying they were recruiting women and I said I didn't want to be one of those mickey females but there was a bit of a recruitment drive for men and women when I was in.... so I decided to apply. (Kate, 175-176)

It was evident in her story that she considered that the informal knowledge that she had garnered from having a father in the Gardai, gave her a degree of informal knowledge (which was a form of cultural capital) that had been useful to her in her employment:

> When you are the daughter of a Guard you were not allowed to play with certain people and when you got into your teenage years the penny dropped and that was innate and it was innate in most police family circles. (Kate, 216-218)

Fianna got her first job in a trucking company where a lot of her relatives worked. Whilst working in her next job she was an active member of a trade union, in time being "lent" by her company to a full time position in the trade union. It was the legacy of trade union activism (a form of both cultural and social capital) in her family

circle, that was to exert most influence on her future career, when discussing her father she said:

> He was kind of involved in the trade unions down there as was my grandfather and great-grandfather. (Fianna, 14-15)

Overall, there is evidence of social mobility with regard to the participants, who came of age in a time period encompassed by 1940-2005. In comparison with their father's SEGs, nine exhibited downward mobility, eleven participants exhibited upward mobility, three remained at the same level, and one cannot be categorised as there is insufficient information regarding the occupation of either parent. There were nine participants whose mothers were employed during their childhood. The mothers of participants who were housewives were assigned the SEG of their husbands. In comparing the SEG of the nine participants with the mothers who had their own SEGs, six participants exhibited upward mobility, two exhibited downward mobility and one remained at the same level. There was only one participant (Shiela), in the entire cohort, whose mother had a higher SEG than her father, Shiela herself had a higher SEG than her mother and is included in the count of the five individuals who exhibited upward mobility.

5.2.4 Comparing participant's SEG as adults (pre-college) with that of their spouses/partners

Of the twenty four participants there were seven individuals who were not involved in significant relationships. Of the remainder two did not give sufficient details of their

spouses/partners' occupations to discern a SEG. This notwithstanding, eight were in the same SEG as their spouses/partners, six had partners in a higher SEG than they were and one had a partner in a lower SEG. However, this has to be interpreted with a degree of caution. In the course of interviews, two respondents cited the occupation that their spouses/partners now held, and had been acquired through many years. Maisie spoke of her husband's high ranking position in banking, however this referred to the present day (i.e. the time of the interview), and not necessarily to his SEG when they first met. Shiela's husband had been a transport driver when they married, but had gone to college and eventually ended up at a very senior level in a multinational company, before starting up in business himself. However, the purpose of including the SEG of spouses and partners was not to assess whether they encountered a change in SEG through personal relationships, rather to track the SEGs they were exposed to prior to their university attendance.

5.3 SEG categorisation and education classification interactions

This section explores the relationship between SEG categorisations and levels of education in order to see whether there is a difference in the level of education attained between SEG categories. This has been achieved through the medium of a modification of the CASMIN classification (a useful guide regarding the interactions of both social background and education schema), this modification is detailed in chapter four. CASMIN has been modified by Whelan et al., (2004) to take account of the Irish system of education, and it enabled the authors to explore social mobility through the

lens of social class structural changes through the 1970s to 2000s. Briefly, their findings suggested that although there was evidence of social class privilege; the level of education attained did appear to facilitate social mobility. However, by using credentials as a mark of the education level attained, an assumption could erroneously be made that an individual not possessed of particular credentials (for instance, a Leaving Certificate), would have left the education system at an early stage and become un/employed. This assumption would fail to take into account the amount of education and associated capital and experiences to which the individual would have been exposed. Hopper (1981) regarded education amount as a determinant of social mobility. Furthermore, Zajonc's (2001) mere exposure effect suggested that exposure to increasing amounts of education could enhance liking, not necessarily exposure to that which was successfully credentialised. In order to explore this aspect of social mobility, within the Irish domain, I was interested in building a picture of the actual amount of formal education the participants were exposed to, rather than only attuning to the level of credentialisation s/he formally attained. To accommodate this stage of the research, I further modified CASMIN to reflect the education amount attained in the family of origin within the specificities of their social milieu rather than to record the qualification received.

5.3.1 Education 'amount' of the participants

The modifications of CASMIN have been detailed in chapter 4. Table 5.3 is an abridged version, showing the columns relevant to the Irish domain which are those originally modified by Whelan et al., (2004) and my modifications (Giblin, 2013). For the

purposes of this thesis, I refer to my modifications in exploring the educational amount of the participants. The data is analysed with reference to the academic level reached rather than the qualification (credential) achieved.

Table 5-3: 2nd modification of CASMIN (Giblin 2013)

CASMIN (Whelan & Layte, 2004)	CASMIN (Giblin,2013)
Primary Certificate or no qualification	(1) Primary school
Group or Intermediate Certificate	(2)Group/Intermediate/Junior Certificate
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	(3)Leaving Certificate or equivalent
Any post second level qualification at sub degree, primary or higher degree level	Tertiary (4a)Secretarial/Commercial/Commercial Language Certificate
	Tertiary (4b)Trade apprenticeship
	Tertiary (4c)Diploma, Specialist Training, Sub-degree
	Tertiary (4d)Degree level

In table 5:4, I have allocated participants into groups according to the highest amount of education that they would have been exposed to whilst ensconced within their family of origin. The SEG assigned to the participant is based on their fathers' occupation. The era that they would have completed their formal education, within their family of origin is indicated by the starting year of the era. This table indicates that irrespective of origin SEG, all participants have received some level of secondary education. There is an absence of any representation from group 4b, with no-one undergoing trade apprenticeships despite the fact that in some families there were fathers or mothers in well established trades. Although there is a variety of SEG recorded at each other group attainment level, SEGs A and B dominate the educational group levels of 4c and 4d across eras from 1950 -2000. However, this dominance must be interpreted in the light of the heterogeneity present in the descriptions of occupations which have been discussed earlier in section 1.2.4 of this chapter.

Table 5-4: Education Amount Groups

EDUCATION AMOUNT GROUP	NAME	SEG	ERA
2	Annie	E	1970
Group/Intermediate/Junior	Tara	Z	1970
Certificate	Linda	E	1970
	Sheila	G	1970
3	Josey	Z	1970
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	Anthony	G	1990
	Seansher	E	1980
	Mildred	A	1950
4a	Kate	D	1970
Secretarial/Commercial/Commercial	Maisie	C	1960
Language Certificate	Monamon	D	1950
	Fianna	E	1990

	Tash	E	1970
4c	Greta	C	1960
Diploma, Specialist Training, Sub-	Ray	A	1970
degree	Marymau	D	1940
4c (cont'd)	Daithi	A	1990
Diploma, Specialist Training, Sub-	Martha	I	1950
degree	Rita	A	1970
4d	Ursula	B	1980
Degree level	Gareth	D	1950
	Ned	B	2000
	Harry	A	2000
	Kevin	D	1990

5.3.1.1 Education attainment Group 2

This group comprises of those (in this sample all were female) who left school in lower secondary, all during the 1970s.[43] All cited this as normal in that era and in their respective social milieus. However, Annie, Linda and Shiela noted that some of their contemporaries continued on to complete their full secondary schooling and it was not unknown for some to enter third level. Both Linda and Shiela felt the need to leave school to earn money and contribute to the family purse, but this was not due to overt pressure from parents. Annie, however, was prevented from sitting for her intermediate certificate by her mother:

> My mother found a job for me as an office junior so she told me I wasn't going back to school before my intermediate certificate as it was known then. (Annie, 39-40)

Annie went on to say that this was not common practise as schools, at that time, tried to get you to at least sit for your Intermediate examination. However, from very early on in her career, she realised that if she was going "to get anywhere or earn any decent money," she would have to educate herself and so she started doing various evening courses. These were all at her own instigation and not always welcomed by her office colleagues. Her mother's attitude to attempts by Annie's younger siblings to continue on in education to third level had not softened over time, she regarded such an aspiration as "having notions about yourself" (Annie, 112-113). Also in this group

[43] Group One is not represented in this thesis.

was Tara, who described herself as a committed community activist and focused on this aspect of her life rather than engaging in an indepth discussion regarding her schooling and employment. Both of the other women in this group got jobs in offices upon leaving school. Shiela was the sixth child in a family of twelve. Her sisters had left school in order to work and give up money at home. They had worked in factories and shops. Shiela was not the only one in her family to have valued education. She said of one of her elder sister's May:

> like she often says I would have loved to stay on, she could have been an accountant you know she's amazing with money and you look back and, like, although I was only there for two years I still had, like, an opportunity I was allowed to stay on in school till I was 15. (Shiela, 122-124)

Shiela's comment gives some indication of the status attached to education within that family, not only in terms of the musings of her sister, but also in her acknowledgement that she was 'allowed' stay on until the age of fifteen. Although both herself and her mother had an interest in knowledge and learning it would simply not have been possible for her to remain in school:

> you didn't you didn't it just wasn't thought of seriously you didn't it wasn't even mentioned like you know, but you see that's because I wouldn't have probably been able to stay on anyway because my mam needed the money... you had to put it down you had to get a

> job and bring in the money I mean you couldn't afford books you just couldn't do it, it just couldn't be done. (Shiela, 213-218)

Her mother was pleased that the job she got was in an office, indicating a value system in place which placed occupations in a hierarchy within the home and the social milieu.

Linda was the fourth child in a family of six. She came from a working class area of Dublin where not many would have completed secondary school. Indeed it was common enough not to have a primary certificate, although one of her elder brothers got a scholarship and completed his Leaving Certificate. Her parents were not particularly encouraging or interested in her schooling, although she said her father believed in education but wouldn't follow it up:

> he used to say you could educate a man then you educate a man but you educate a woman and you educate family, he always said that so maybe that's why I always made an effort maybe that's why I went I got on to secondary. (Linda, 52-55)

In the stories told by Linda and Shiela, there was an assumption of responsibility of all in the family to contribute to the upkeep of the family, which meant that these women did not continue to do their Leaving Certificate, even though there is evidence of a level of appreciation for education within the family.

Linda enjoyed school and was one of only six students chosen to study the honours Maths course. This would have been an important marker of her potential ability given that in the era of the 1970s, many girls' schools, even those situated in affluent suburbs, for instance those described by Maisie and Greta, did not facilitate subjects such as higher level maths, applied maths and so forth. It is also of note that this subject was being provided outside of regular school hours by teachers in a working class suburb of Dublin. But she felt that: "there was no real interest, like show me what you are doing, you know the sort of thing you need, it helps you". When her father died she left school in order to contribute financially to the household:

> No-one told me to but I went out to work. I just felt like no one told me to go back to school so I just went to look for a job and I got one. (Linda, 79-80)

In this group, Annie was the only one who left school prior to completing a second level examination, at the instigation of her mother. Tara, Linda and Shiela left at intermediate certificate level. These three women would all have alluded to one or both parents being interested in education in an informal sense, for instance being fond of reading or current affairs:

> My dad had a very decent job. There was no emphasis on education, I wouldn't say they knew anyone with a degree...my father's a very intelligent man very well read would have an opinion on and could back it up with quotes stats (Tara,232-241).

The stories told by these women, indicate that leaving secondary school mid cycle seems to have been an accepted norm within their (SEGs E, Z, E, G) social milieu.

5.3.1.2 Education Attainment Group 3

The participants placed in group 3 completed second level schooling, but following on from this did not proceed with additional education. They represent education undertaken in the eras from the 1950s to the 1990s and in common with the other groups exhibit a range of social backgrounds. These participants completed their education to the Leaving Certificate grade with Josie and Mildred successfully passing their exams. Josie indicated that it would have been normal within her social milieu to continue on to third level should one wish to do so:

> The money was there, I was the fourth in the family and it was always go and get a good secretarial course. The first two did the Irish secretarial course and the third one went into retail and then I came along and I went into catering and travelled Europe. The choice was there but we took different directions ... but I was never happy that I didn't finish my education. (Josie: 12-20)

Mildred was born and educated in the West of Ireland and completed her secondary education to Leaving Certificate, in the era of 1950, in a single sex convent. Her parents ran a drapery and shoe business, with the help of staff, in the local town. She

said that in her social milieu it would have been expected that you would continue in education up to the Leaving Certificate grade. When asked whether this extended to going to college she said she would not have gone at that stage as it was quite expensive. In talking about opportunities following leaving secondary, she emphasised rites of passage being teaching and working in the civil service:

> The opportunity was there to do the entrance exam and you were encouraged to apply for it...it was the civil service entrance exam...teaching was very popular as well, primary teaching, well for one thing I didn't sing, I didn't gear myself up for teaching. Anyway the civil service was that was fairly good standards it was achievable. (Mildred, 25-34)

Mildred's mother was widowed in 1953, and although she said that this was "probably part of the reason" she didn't consider third level, she also qualified this by saying that "it was very standard of the times" not to go to college, but to get jobs in the civil service, banking or the post office. Josey finished her secondary education in the era of the 1970s and had planned to apply for a college course:

> basically I wanted to do nursing, and you had to study, and I didn't study. I failed biology then I decided, "oh sure I'll go back, I'll just mess about for the summer" got a job in catering, my brother worked in Pizza Palace and it was, "ah sure for the summer I'll do that and I'll go back in September" and I never did. (Josie, 6-9)

In the stories as told by Mildred and Josie, there was support for engagement, at least to Leaving Certificate within both the family and school spheres. There was also evidence of rites of passage and normative expectations in terms of life beyond secondary school with mention made of secretarial courses and government employment. There is a suggestion of streaming expectation through gender in terms of the possible third level courses that could have been considered, nursing in the case of Josie and teaching in the case of Mildred.

The stories of Anthony and Seansher offered different reflections and opinions regarding their education. Both talked at length about their dysfunctional family backgrounds. Neither believed that they had experienced anything within their education that would have facilitated them in becoming potential third level attendees although Seansher was keen to do so at the time:

> I had ideas actually thinking about going into third level. I did actually repeat my Leaving or I repeated fifth year... I stayed back, it was at my own instigation that I did that ... there was an awful lot of pressure at home and it still kept going. (Seansher, 37-41).

Seansher emphasised that he did not live in a "notorious blackspot or anything like that...nobody went to third level before I applied for it through TAP" Seansher (15-20). Anthony had extremely negative views regarding his education, regarding it as a site of "constant never ending bullying" from primary school onwards which, he believed,

contributed to his eventually experiencing a mental breakdown in the final years of secondary school. Aside from his own experiences, being schooled in the South of Ireland, he was of the opinion that:

> Third level education was the reserve, certainly in our way, the reserve was of those whose parents who had gone to third level themselves... I felt that was the way. You could see it in secondary school where the teachers would stream those who they regarded as the best or brightest, who tended as often as not to be em to be the doctor's son, the teacher's son, the eh so on and so forth those who were slightly better off... it was a deeply ingrained assumption of those who were middle class would go onto third level. The rest were just being educated I felt to go off and go to England to dig holes. (Anthony, 140-151)

The most pertinent difference in the experience of these two participants was that Seansher had the support of his mother throughout all of his educational endeavours whereas Anthony was quite alone, in terms of having no familial or scholastic support. However, they shared a legacy of a dysfunctional up-bringing in that both suffered mental health problems in the post second level years, Anthony's being particularly profound and ongoing.

Notable in the stories of the participants in group 3, was that those who had supportive families of origin, were comfortable in their educational environment even

if the final grade in the Leaving Certificate exam (Josie) had not been such that would facilitate third level attendance. Those without such support had difficulties getting through primary and/or secondary school and consequently had difficulty in engaging in society, thus highlighting the importance of intimate support from the early stages of an individual's life. Yet despite these differences in support levels and difference in satisfactory engagement with education, all four were open to focus on re-engagement with education at a later stage in life.

5.3.1.3 Education Attainment Group 4a

Group 4a is comprised of women who represent a variety of SEGs (C, D, E) and is an example of gendering of education, in that education was a tool streamlining women into specific occupations from an early age, by perpetuating social norms which narrowed the scope of women from (in this case) the 1950s to 1990s, supported by the actions of either or both institutional actors (teachers) and significant family members. This group comprises of women who completed some form of secretarial or commercial course (either immediately or after a short hiatus) upon finishing their secondary education. Kate, Maisie, Monamon and Fianna all finished school at Leaving Certificate level, Tash at Intermediate Certificate level. Tash came from a family of fourteen in a working class area of Dublin. She thought her parents to be very intelligent and regarded education as important but "economics wouldn't allow it "Tash (26-33). In common with women in Group 2 who left after their Intermediate certificate (but who did not proceed to a secretarial course) money was a factor:

> You couldn't wait to get out and earn money you know and ... you were very conscious of the fact that when you were earning, you know, you handed over half your money, you know. (Tash, 47-50)

In Tash's experience the school in her area recognised that many of the pupils would leave mid way to go to work and therefore structured the curriculum accordingly:

> it was part of my schooling, it was very much, you know, schools we went to would have been geared towards ... they had a typing course was part of the curriculum and you know I think because it was a working class area they recognised, you know, that we would be leaving school and that we would be working, you know, and need the skills. But I went to a secretarial course and didn't like it very much, didn't stay the distance and ended up working in Shines[44] factory. (Tash, 60-69).

Despite having done a typing course at school, her mother had pushed for her to register on a secretarial course upon leaving school. Even though Tash got a job on a factory assembly line, (a job she quite liked) she eventually succumbed to her mother's ambition: "[she] kept pushing me to get an office job so eventually I got one" (Tash, 76-77). Tash's case is useful in highlighting of how agents in the home and in school (in this case the mother and teachers) perpetuated a particularly gendered social norm in regards to the world of work.

[44] Pseudonym for factory where Tash worked.

In the same vein, both Maisie and Monamon highlighted the effect of gendering in their respective educational experience. Maisie's comment offers a view of what was expected of women, whilst Monamon's comment gives us an insight into how the whole family would be involved in the process of facilitating the education of the male in the family:

> in the later sixties and seventies the girls weren't expected to go to college....one of my friends, my closest friend, is a Dean of a university she had to struggle to say, yes, I want to go to college. Another friend is a doctor and we have talked about that she really had to fight and say, yes I want to go to college. See we didn't even do honours maths ... back then you weren't encouraged to reach your potential, and just do whatever you did, you were waiting to be married. (Maisie, 53-75)

> So for the fortnight she rented out the whole house put all the family stuff into one room locked it and rented us a cottage and lived there on almost nothing for the summer to save for a bike for my brother so that he could go up and down to St Paul's.[45] (Monamon, 113-116)

Whilst money was tight in Monamon's family, her mother made sure all her children had a full secondary education. In that era, this necessitated private education, which

[45] Pseudonym for school.

she paid for from various entrepreneurial ventures including subletting their home, pawning articles and so forth. Her father was a functioning alcoholic so contributed little to the family coffers, however, she talked fondly of her family of origin and her mother's ability to keep "face" and family intact. In contrast, Maisie would have regarded her family as financially comfortable. Both regarded their home lives as happy but both would have had experiences in school which led them to believe that certain teachers did not regard them as being intellectually competent:

> The priest would come in, the visiting priest, and the question would always be: "Oh you have twins and which one is the brighter?" And the teacher would always say: "Oh you know Niamh [Monamon's sister] is the brighter, but Monamon is the poet. (Monamon, 167-164)

> I went to a local *** convent school, hated it, hated it. I know I was bullied, they put me in the wrong year. Looking back now I was in with kids who were a year older so I get struggled...I put a lot of it down to those years... the nun used to quiz me about my brother[s], and on the basis that they were so bright she decided that I was not bothering myself, you know, that I was lazy, you know. It never struck anyone that I was in the wrong class. So I don't know, times were different back then. Parents didn't get involved in the school it was up to the school to decide (Maisie, 20-42).

In both cases, Maisie and Monamon said that overall they enjoyed school but did not feel that they excelled academically.

Kate and Fianna had both hoped to continue onto third level education. Kate had hoped to get a place in teacher training college but was not successful in her application, trying on two separate occasions. Fianna got a place in university but felt that she was not sure enough that the course she had chosen was the right one for her. In both cases, the parents would have supported them in terms of paying fees for college attendance, if grants and scholarships had not been sufficient. In Fianna's case her parents' income put them marginally over the level for the then grant. Her parents were not rich and her mother, whilst assuring her that they would pay for her to attend college, wanted her to take time out to make sure she made the right choice:

> I got whatever the offer was. I remember we went up to Dublin Castle because my mother wanted to check out if we were entitled to the grant, and it appeared we were just shy of one ... just a little tiny bit over so at the time I remember them saying you know ... are you sure you want to do that ... if you really don't want to do it go back and have a think about it and you know go to work... and in a couple of years you can come back to college and you know we'll give you the money for it. (Fianna, 146-152)

Such a thought process highlights three facets of importance namely: 1) the level of priority placed on education, 2) it's commodification in terms of launching someone on

to a particular path in life, and 3) the most probably subliminal accessing of sunk costs. In any event, for Tash, Kate and Fianna, it was their mothers' influence that resulted in their attending, albeit somewhat unwillingly, secretarial courses.

5.3.1.4 Education Attainment Group 4c

[46]The group of participants constituting group 4c encompass eras stretching from 1950-1990 and incorporate SEGs C, D, I and A. This is the only group where there is a domination of one SEG, in this case A being the SEG of 3/6 of the participants. Martha applied for her course on successful completion of her Intermediate Certificate, Rita failed her Leaving Certificate and, following a stint as an au pair, applied for and was accepted onto a design course in a private Academy in Dublin. For four of the participants (Greta, Ray, Marymau and Martha), their qualification at sub degree level was a necessary requirement to engage in their occupations. All of these participants would have spoken of having supportive families with regard to the notion of education and progression to some form of additional education. Martha's career decisions cast a lens on a bygone era in terms of extinguished work streams. It also offers insight into variety within the gendering of education in the sense that there was, at the time, a career path for women who wanted to engage in that with which they were familiar, in Martha's case, coming from an agricultural background she had determined that she wanted a career in agriculture. She applied and was accepted onto a course to qualify as a poultry advisor. This was a competitive and popular course:

[46] Group 4b is not represented in this Thesis

> You had to do two years in a rural school for this thing. For that, that was just an entrance to training. At the entrance to training you had to do two years in a domestic economy school ... and another two years in the Munster Institute in Cork which was the only centre at the time ... they only took sixteen and there might be 100 doing it ... it was all women at that stage. (Martha, 18-31)

Greta did her Leaving Certificate in the 1960s, she enjoyed school but had no ambition to do as her contemporaries and engage in a secretarial course. She said that it would not have been possible for her to apply for a college place as her school did not offer Latin which, Greta believed, was a prerequisite to gaining a place on a university course. Greta was the only individual in the entire cohort who specifically mentioned the influence of peers in her choosing a career path:

> I had a friend who became a lab technician, and I found out that there were things that you could do without science because we had done a course called physiology and science when I was at school so ... I applied for jobs in labs and I got one ... you were trained on the job you went to night classes in Kevin Street tech ... you did exams you went to Belfast and did exams set by the English crowd ... that was what I wanted to work at. (Greta: 48-58)

Ray and Dathi both referred to having English influences in their upbringing in terms of making social class distinctions. Ray was born, reared and educated in England. Following his schooling, he worked in a care home for a year, and it was this practical experience that guided his interest in nursing, specifically intellectual disability nursing. Though his parents were supportive, they were aware and somewhat wary of his specialisation as it was "the lower end of it [nursing] rather than the higher end of it you know" (Ray, 47-48) thus making a distinction in the status of various types of nursing. Daithi was educated at private primary and boarding schools in Ireland which he felt was due to his father being English:

> It was his English background, there was a lot of class distinction when he was growing up and I think he thought that it would be this way here, so because of that he would get his sons into private education. (Daithi, 81-82)

Daithi was not the only individual in the entire cohort to discuss social class differences in terms of education and expectation, but he was the only one to discuss it in terms of supposed advantage to self. He had gone to private schools and had not performed particularly well in his Leaving Certificate, for instance when discussing interviews:

> You find that with [name of private school] that a lot of the guys who went there went into the merchant bank after, and they always got into final interviews, which is kind of suspicious, and you know, well I actually went for a merchant bank interview when I left school. I

> didn't do a great Leaving, but I did get to the final shout, the interview ... there are certain ways that certain things work... the old schoolboy network keeps the door open. (Daithi, 88-96)

Daithi said that he only worked at school at subjects that interested him, which he believed to be in part the reason for his poor Leaving Certificate results. However, it would have been expected of Daithi to continue his education, and so he enrolled on a certificate in marketing programme. This was at the behest of his family, he had enough points to enrol in an Arts course, and he would have liked to do so, but his family wanted him to engage in some sort of business course as the family background was in business. Daithi was the only individual in the entire cohort to be encouraged to choose a path that would be in keeping with the family occupations.

In keeping with the rest of this group, Marymau came from a background that was supportive of education. However, she made reference to her broader family background in terms of being reared for a time by her grandmother, drawing particular attention to the influence of religion throughout her story. For instance, Marymau placed great weight on the fact that her grandmother had been a Protestant prior to marriage:

> She was very good living and honest. She was still a bit different from the other women about things ... parents at that time ... were dominated by the church and by religion and their children, small children, were never allowed to think for themselves ... I was from a

> very, very young age. I know that now, and I put that down to my grandmother ... she was more independently minded than my friends' parents, you know, she wasn't brainwashed. (Marymau, 35-44)

Aside from acknowledging the influence of her grandmother, Marymau also spoke highly of the education she received at boarding school and the passion of some of the teachers there in broadening the pupils' horizons and expanding their minds, especially in the area of science and maths.

5.3.1.5 Educational Attainment Group 4d

SEGs A, B and D are represented in this group of participants, encompassing eras from 1950-2000. For the participants of this group, possession of a third level qualification, at degree level was necessary to engage in their occupations. All participants spoke of having supportive families with regard to the notion of education and of progression to third level. Gareth recalled that his "mother's nickname was Mrs Education" (Gareth, 622). Harry talked of his father sitting him down before he went to secondary school saying: "this is really important and there is nothing here for you" (Harry, 45-46) as they had a large family and though his father progressed through the ranks of the Gardai, there was very little money available. Ursula highlights the importance of having books available from an early age as well as exposure to those interested in education:

> When I was little I had the ladybird book of the story of medicine and I remember being very interested from that point in medicine ... I remember from a young age, in primary, being very interested in science and maths. So then in secondary school I was all science and maths ... I had a fantastic chemistry and maths teacher, she inspired me. (Ursula, 30-37).

Aside from this teacher, Ursula would cite her parents as being supportive rather than directional. She was the only child of her parents (both remarried) who had a college level education. Her parents had funded her education through a covenant tax arrangement. She spoke of flaws in the funding system:

> So people on a very low income, a few got their fees paid. Many whose parents were farmers had their fees paid while staying in the family apartment in D4,[47] while the rest of us had parents who either budgeted the money, or took loans to put us through (Ursula: 73-76).

From the data it was evident that members of group 4d (and group 4c) wanted to choose their tertiary education based on their own interests. However, this was not always possible. Kevin is a somewhat unique case in this study as he is a Chinese national who was born and reared in the Northern provinces of China. He was clever, particularly in Mathematics and was selected for ongoing education, however he was not sure of the direction in which he wanted to go and did not do the necessary work

[47] D4 refers to a postal code in the Dublin area associated with wealth and privilege

to get into a well regarded degree course, having to settle for a lesser third level qualification. Harry, Ned and Ursula had to deviate somewhat from their desired courses and careers, and choose alternative paths as they did not gain sufficient points in the Leaving Certificate to get a place on their first choice courses. Ursula had been intent on pursuing a medical degree and missed the requirement by one point. She decided to pursue pharmacy instead, happily working in this area for a number of years. Similarly Ned did not get enough points in his Leaving Certificate to pursue a course in physiotherapy, so deviated and took up a sports scholarship abroad and whilst there, was able to structure his degree to include science subjects relevant to physiotherapy with the view of applying as a mature student on his return to Ireland. Harry did not get enough points in the Leaving Certificate to study dentistry and pursued a degree in teaching. However, he never lost the desire for dentistry and, as was the case with Ned, applied for a place on the course as a mature student when he reached the appropriate age. In these cases the individuals never lost the passion for their core interests, reapplying for medicine, physiotherapy and dentistry as mature students, they are a good example of education facilitating a systemic correction, that is, in returning to formal education at a later stage to pursue their original choices. Yet again, this group from different social backgrounds and eras, draws attention to the importance of some form of familial and/or school encouragement in developing and supporting their choices.

Group 4b has not been discussed in this section as none of the participants engaged on an apprenticeship trade course. Common to the entire cohort was the fact that none of the participants had the intention of following their fathers/mothers into

employment in specific fields. Though Kate was somewhat of an exception in that she eventually followed her father into the Gardai, but only after having worked in a variety of occupations for a number of years. Therefore none were getting the benefit of prior familial knowledge, which lends itself to an absorption of specific cultural capital (Hansen, 2001). They had developed their particular interests either as a result of formal or informal interests, developed the appropriate skills through accredited learning and then been accepted into their fields and gainfully occupied within those fields as a result of those accreditations. This chapter has already made reference to the relationships between the participants' adult occupations and the occupations in their families of origin. The next section moves on to explore this aspect of social mobility in more depth.

5.4 Referencing social mobility

In section 5.2.3 I stated that the data showed (in comparison with their fathers' occupations) as adults (prior to coming to Trinity College as mature students) nine participants have experienced downward social mobility, eleven have experienced upward mobility, three have remained constant and the story of one participant lacks sufficient detail to be classified. In this section I explore the findings regarding social mobility (pre Trinity attendance) in more depth, by looking at the education attainment groups and the relationship of these to social mobility.

Table 5.5 shows in detail how the individuals in each education attainment group experience social mobility based on comparison of their own occupations prior to coming to Trinity and that of their fathers. In Group 2 (Group, Intermediate or Junior Certificate level) there was evidence of upward social mobility in three cases and downward social mobility in one case. In Group 3 (Leaving Certificate or equivalent, there were two instances of downward social mobility, one of upward social mobility, and one instance where there was insufficient information to make a judgement. In Group 4a (secretarial, commercial or commercial language course) there were four instances of upward social mobility and one of downward mobility. In Group 4c (diploma, specialist credentialised training, sub degree level) there were two instances of upward social mobility, three of downward social mobility and one where there was no change. In Group 4d there was one instance of upward social mobility, two of downward social mobility and two instances where there was no change.

The data analysis therefore suggests that the amount of education attained that results in upward social mobility occurs, when the individuals either leave with an intermediate amount of second level education (Group 2) and when they gain a sub degree level qualification, such as a secretarial, or commercial or commercial language course (Group 4a).

However these findings must be interpreted with caution and mindful of the following provisos:

(1) As noted in the methodology chapter the aim of the development of the SEG classification system by the CSO was not to rank groups in order of socio-economic importance, but to acknowledge the different levels of skills or education required to bring together persons with similar social and economic statuses. However the similarity between the social class classification (which is ranked hierarchically based on the levels of skill required to perform an occupation) and SEG (which acknowledges levels of skill and education), is such that for the purposes of this thesis SEG is being considered as a hierarchical structure.

(2) The upward/downward social movement is limited in explanation as there is no adequate way of measuring the distances between ranks, or no presumption that there is equal distance between ranks.

(3) The assignment of an SEG leaves significant room for interpretation and there is overlap in occupation descriptions in the CSO classifications. For instance cashiers and counter clerks being listed in CSO SEG classifications A and D. In the case of this study a judgement call was made as to what SEG assignation to give to an occupation based on the descriptions of the participants.

(4) Table 5.5 is denoting correlations between amounts of education, SEG of origin and SEG as adult. However, correlations are not causations, and other variables may have been responsible for these associations.

Table 5-5: Education amount attained groups origin and adult (pre mature student status) and social mobility.

GROUP	NAME	SEG ORIGIN	SEG ADULT	DIRECTION
2	Annie	E	D	↑
	Tara	Z	*	↓
	Linda	E	D	↑
	Shiela	G	D	↑
3	Josey	Z	C	**
	Anthony	G	F	
	Seansher	E	*	↓
	Mildred	A	C	↓
4a	Kate	D	A	↑
	Maisie	C	D	↓
	Monamon	D	C	↑
	Fianna	E	C	↑
	Tash	E	D	↑
4c	Greta	C	C	=
	Ray	A	C	↓
	Marymau	D	C	↑
	Daithi	A	D	↓
	Martha	I	C	↑
	Rita	A	C	↓
4d	Ursula	B	B	=

	Gareth	D	B	↑
	Ned	B	D	↓
	Harry	A	C	↓
	Kevin	D	D	=

*** denotes unemployment, ** denotes insufficient information**

In these stories as told by the participants about their family lives and early educational experiences, there is evidence of education systems acting as selective filters and distributors of cultural styles and life chances in terms of mediating the status quo of the era and location. These stories have also suggested the influence of gender in perpetuating social norms, which seems to have been quite resilient not only in terms of SEG but also across eras, with education being used as a tool to propel females on to certain occupational paths and away from others. These stories have also highlighted the importance of having supportive agents (family and/or school) in the formative years and the detrimental effect that maladaptive agents (family and/or school) can have on the development and educational growth of the individual. These are explored in the next two sections.

5.5 Gendered power and the replication of social norms

Having explored the association between SEG and education, attention is now turned to the to the interplay of power and gender as exercised by attachment models within the family. Five respondents (Kate, Tash, Monamon, Fianna, Annie) drew attention to

the mother role in terms of directing and supporting their offspring as well as perpetuating gendered occupations within a hierarchical structure. Tash, Fianna and Annie would all have referenced their mothers as guiding their choices during the early course of their lives. Tash was happy to leave school midway through the senior cycle, and complete a secretarial course building on the typing classes that she would have done in school: "The lads always had to get a trade the girls had to get a secretarial course you know." (Tash, 11) She got a job on a factory assembly line which she really enjoyed but left at her mother's urging : "I quite liked the job, I liked the camaraderie but my mother didn't want me to stay there, and she kept pushing me to get an office job" (Tash:75-77).

Fianna would have gone to secretarial college also, at the instigation of her mother. Whilst there she dressed alternatively, and although this was never brought up as an issue by the course directors, she was not sent out on work experience which was an essential part of the course. Her mother had "inner knowledge" as another daughter had completed the course as had other neighbourhood girls, she was vigilant as to what should happen rather than what was happening and took it on herself to ring the college and investigate the reasons why Fianna's work experience had not begun. She then negotiated a solution with the course director. Later, when Fianna was happily working for a well regarded trucking company, it was her mother who urged her to look elsewhere, on the basis that it wasn't a good idea for so many family members to work for the one company just in case it was ever to close:

> my mother was kinda going, you know, your brother is down there, your father is down there, but we can't have you down there as well. So she was constantly scanning the papers looking for something else, you know she always did it always did it for all of us. (Fianna, 36-76)

Her mother had seen an advert in a daily paper for clerical workers for an established company and urged Fianna to apply. The day of the interview the weather was dreadful and the queues were very long. The respect given to the role of mother is succinctly summarised by Fianna's comments:

> it's funny how one moment can change your entire life and I said, I don't know, I'm never going to get this job, so if I don't stand in the queue my mother is never going to know. 'Cos it was lashing you see, and I was soaked even with a brolly, but I'm thinking she'll never know she'll never know if I don't go into it, and then I thought, ah feck it I'll stay. (Fianna, 279-281)

Annie's mother took her out of school as she had found her a job in a local firm. Annie discussed a volatile home life where they moved house frequently and where her mother had no regard for education. Aside from directing Annie away from education into employment, her role (being female and the eldest) within the family would have been as aide to her mother, minding or arranging care for the younger children and combining this with her own education and in time, employment. A

feature common to all these women was the handing up of money at home. Annie would have handed up three quarters of her wages. Tash spoke of this ritual and there being no question of moving out until you got married. "Keep" was given to the mother even if negotiated with the father (Fianna). Similarly, Kate talked of a little black book where her mother kept a record of her "keep " from which she could borrow should the need arise. From this perspective it can be seen how women in the role of mother have been in a position to guide, instruct and control their female daughters beyond their childhood years, to the extent that even though the daughters are engaged in the social sphere of work they are still being formed by filial bonds. This gendering of expectation and experience with respect to an early attachment model from within the family by the same sex role model and within the structure of school based education has been firmly embedded within social and cultural norms and, with respect to those interviewed for this thesis, spanned a series of decades from the fifties to the eighties.

The experiences of two of the males however, informs as to the effect of early attachment within a supportive family. Seansher describes his family upbringing as dysfunctional, his father a tyrant and his mother worn out by his bullying tactics. However he would credit his mother with trying to support his endeavours where possible:

> me mam kind of basically fought for me, fought my corner, for us all really, it was against the tyranny, it was a living tyranny to live in the house. There was a lot of negative vibes in the house it wasn't the most conducive place to be. (Seansher, 29-31).

Seansher frequently referred to the toxic effect his father's outlook had on not only himself, but his siblings also. Anthony talked of an absent father, an overburdened alcoholic mother and an absence of care regarding his education or his health: "she was so preoccupied with her own problems and by that stage the alcoholism had really taken over" (Anthony: 132). Subsequently he endured a dreadful schooling life marked by bullying both institutional and social, which he believes has had a long lasting detrimental effect on his mental health:

> I learnt very little at school, extremely little. It was because of the constant, never ending bullying which persisted throughout primary and secondary school in different forms. Eh, what I've always thought, certainly over the past few years, when you hear so much debate over the issue of abuse in church going institutions, that the light has not been shone on the mental physical and sexual abuse that went on in the average national and secondary school up and down the country, and I think it's the elephant in the room. (Anthony, 26-31).

These men were enduring rather than enjoying life. Gareth and Daithi both had parental influences that they considered positive and encouraging. Gareth (616) spoke of his mother exploring every avenue and pushing her children to progress in education: "I think that it has to do with the home that I grew up in, the home that I grew up in put a premium on education." The effect of having this focus may have had

an intergenerational effect with Gareth prioritising education in the lives of his own children, as when asked whether he viewed college attendance as important for them he replied: "oh yes yeah it would have been my ambition for them" (Gareth, 434). Daithi's father was instrumental in charting the course of his children's occupation through the private school education, believing that this would be key to giving them social advantage.

The stories of Greta and Maisie and Monamon offer an additional perspective on the gendering of education. Their brothers would all have been expected to and would have gone on to third level. Whilst the parents of Greta and Maisie would have been prepared to support them in their endeavours, there was no expectation that they would go on to degree level education. In Monamon's family, whilst education was encouraged and they were recipients of a private secondary school education, the focus was on their brother in proceeding to a university level education:

> I really wanted to go and my twin really wanted to go. At one stage I wanted to be a doctor and she wanted to be a doctor...and my poor dad, I will always remember my mother, she handled all the money. But my dad said when she told him she wanted to go, if you want to go you can go, and of course, but of course, and you know he was living in fairy land. It was completely impossible you know. (Monamon, 253-258)

If the girls had won scholarships they could have gone but otherwise it was not a priority. According to Greta (28), there was an idea that a girl would get: "a good job somewhere so that they could get a good husband you know."

These interviews encompassed women who would have been teenagers from the 1950s onwards and suggests that educational provisions continued to be highly gendered, as noted by Greta:

> We had no Science teachers. Girls education was really limited. There were even special papers for girls like pass maths at Inter cert level. There were papers with 'girls only' written across the top of it. (Greta, 31-32)

Maisie echoed these views:

> Back then you weren't encouraged to reach your potential and just whatever you did you did you were waiting to be married ... back in the later sixties and seventies the girls weren't expected to go to college. (Maisie, 54-57)

By incorporating in the educational curricula different expectations (special papers for females for instance), together with the social norms experienced by these participants which limited the educational experiences and expectations of females, education could be said to have performed systemic errors rather than corrections in

situating women in a supportive rather than an equal role with their male counterparts. The assumption that their brothers would go to third level as expressed naturally in dialogue with Monamon, Greta and Maisie serves as example as to how this social norm was perpetuated within these families. The next section will offer an additional element to the analysis by exploring in more depth the effect of significant agents (parents, peers and teachers) in the educational journey of this cohort.

5.6 Decoupling of parallel progression

In Hopper's (1981) theory of social mobility, life is lived along the paraliel progression of the life-cycle and the life-trajectory (for explanation refer to chapter 3), thus situating an individual in a particular groove in the ecological environment, within particular levels on the social strata (Hopper, 1981). As a result, the chid is exposed to three spheres of influence; family, school and peers. There are many individuals within each of these spheres; for instance within the family, there could be a mother and/or father, siblings, and a close extended family, or other family formations, within school there could be a diverse group of teachers and the peer group could not only be diverse within the group but also referent from different aspects of the respondents life. For instance, Kate had a peer group from her local area that she was friendly with as well a different group of friends from her secondary school.

The findings presented in this chapter thus far have cast a lens on family background and childhood experiences. It is evident from the narratives of the participants, that

particular importance is attached to the level of significance given to education in terms of the regard in which it is held within family of origin and also to their interactions with the school system and agents of that system. Thus far SEG has been explored and findings suggest that the association between SEG and educational progression is somewhat problematic. There has been evidence of movement both up and down the social scale with respect to intergenerational mobility and also evidence of a variety of SEGs at each marker of educational amount. All participants, in returning to education are violating some aspect of the parallel dynamic of progression along the life-cycle and life-trajectory in the present stages of their personal development. In this section, a different perspective, by which to explore these phenomena, has been undertaken by probing the notion of concurrent advancement along the life-cycle and life-trajectory, in association with the influence of family, parents, schools and peers and to explore to what extent, if any, there is evidence of maladaptive influences (rather than norms within the social milieu) which may have caused the participants to deviate away from an educational trajectory.

Attempting to explore this concept, has led to the tentative development of a decoupling model of parallel progression (figure 5.1, table 5.6). The purpose of this model build is to attempt to identify agents of influence on an individual's advancement and attempts to unpick mal/adaptive influences of these agents on educational progress. This model has been developed from the analysis of the participants' life histories and the references they made to parents, teachers and peers in the course of their own maturation.

5.6.1 Determinants of decoupling model

- Toxic: One who bullies, discourages or contributes to a dysfunctional environment. One who belittles and discourages progression or endeavour in the child/ children.
- Complacent: One who accepts the status quo and does not seek to belittle or encourage beyond accepted norms.
- Supportive: One who seeks to promote educational ambitions either within or beyond social norms.

Influences on parallel progression along education trajectory and life-cycle pathways

(1) Parent: a) toxic parent, b) complacent parent, c) supportive parent

(2) Teacher: a) toxic teacher, b) complacent parent, c) supportive parent

(3) Peer: a) toxic peer, b) complacent peer c) supportive peer

Figure 5-1: Influential agents on parallel progression

Whilst acknowledging the heterogeneity of influences present from an individual's early life, the decoupling model of parallel progression is offered as a model simple, referring to three spheres of influences: Parents, Teachers, and Peers. This has been done not to "tar all with the same brush", (for instance, if one parent is supportive but the other is toxic) but for the sake of expediency, in order to identify whether there was a toxic element in any of these spheres and to further explore whether this was sufficient to have a negative effect on the respondent's educational trajectory.

5.6.2 Exploring life-trajectory and life-cycle parallel progression

Each of the participants in this research has violated the parallel sequencing of their life trajectories and life-cycles by deviating from these pathways and returning to education as fulltime third level students. Hopper (1981) suggests this is a systemic correction (of flaws made in the initial societal selection process at a previous point in time), performed to insure that society gets an opportunity to fully exploit the potential of individuals. Thus far, this chapter has attempted to look within broad labels associated with social background and educational progression and to explore nuances within. Building on this, and focusing on education, table 5.6 displays the decoupling model of parallel progression in use attempting to identify any negative element of a toxic nature, which featured in the stories of the respondents as having an impact on their educational progression.

Table 5-6: Decoupling Model of Parallel Progression

PARTICIPANT	PARENT	TEACHER	PEER	PARALLEL PROGRESSION
Annie	A	A	B	X
Tara	B	B	B	
Linda	B	B	B	
Shiela	A	B	B	X
Josey	B	B	B	
Anthony	A	A	A	X
Seansher	A	B	B	X

Mildred	B	B	B	
Kate	C	A	B	X
Maisie	B	B	A	X
Monamon	B	A	B	X
Fianna	C	B	B	
Tash	C	B	B	
Greta	C	B	B	
Ray	B	B	B	
Marymau	B	C	B	
Daithi	B	C	B	
Martha	B	B	B	
Rita	B	B	B	
Ursula	C	C	C	
Gareth	C	B	B	
Ned	B	B	B	
Harry	C	B	B	
Kevin	C	B	B	

Analysis of the participants' stories suggests that the negative effect of toxicity occurring in a ratio of 1:2 has been sufficient to decouple parallel progression. In four cases, a parent was involved. Seansher and Shiela talked at length about having tyrannical fathers who cast a pall over the whole family, actively bullying and behaving in a dismissive manner. Anthony and Annie talked of mothers who were very unsupportive. In Anthony's case his mother was an alcoholic who was overwhelmed,

and in Annie's case, her mother was extremely dismissive of education and intent on getting her children into the workforce. As a family, they moved house many times and as a consequence moved schools leading to gaps in knowledge, and some negative pupil-teacher relationships. Annie recalled one particular nun who she felt targeted her for particular negative attention:

> Yeah, well she would she put me on the front of the class with another girl and then when maths, say for example, would come up, you were so terrified of her going to hit you, you weren't taking in what she was trying to teach anybody. So therefore nothing was going in, so she would take advantage of this and she would keep digging away, keep smacking you, went all that kind of stuff, so this went on in fifth class for the year I was there. And then I was very lucky to get away from that school because at the end of fifth class my mother moved again, and we moved to another school so I escaped her. (Annie, 23-28)

Maisie and Kate both experienced toxic behaviour from a teacher in their respective schools. Maisie experienced bullying in primary school from peers which she attributed to her being very young for that class: " hated it, hated it, looking back now I know I was bullied, they put me in the wrong year, looking back now I was in with kids who were a year older so I struggled" Maisie (18-20). Although this occurred in primary school Maisie felt this was far reaching, leading, in secondary school, to the presumption by a teacher that she was lazy:

> She decided that I was not bothering myself, you know, that I was lazy. You know it never struck anyone that I was in the wrong class. So I dunno, times were different back then, parents didn't get involved in the school. It was up to the school to decide ... so I grew up thinking I was as thick as two short planks. (Maisie, 40-51)

Kate talked about having difficulties with two teachers in secondary school, one who regarded her as stupid in her ambition to be a teacher, and the other who took umbrage that Kate did not take her advice regarding the level (honours or pass) of exam she should undertake. Both Kate and Maisie talked of having happy home lives and supportive parents, however Kate exhibited more resilience than Maisie, in terms of the extent to which negatively intruded on self confidence. It is impossible to ascertain all dispositional and situational factors that facilitate resilience. Possible contributory factors in Kate's situation was that her encounters with toxic behaviour came quite late in her school career, when she was preparing for her leaving certificate, whereas Maisie's bad experiences happened very early on in her school career when she was still a young child. Kate had at this stage established herself in the school, excelled in sport which brought prestige to the school generally, had a clear goal and direction for her future career, had a good circle of friends and got on well with other teachers, having one teacher in particular who championed Kate and mediated on her behalf.

This model offers an alternative perspective (to that of social background) in exploring the acquisition of education capital by identifying levels of support, exercised by

parents, teachers and peers within the formative years of human development. In using this model as a filter the data analysis suggests that:

(1) The amount and /or qualification achieved prior to leaving the educational system was influenced by agents within the family and school systems.

(2) The amount and/or qualification achieved prior to leaving the educational system was influenced by the presence/absence of maladaptive influences within the family and school systems.

(3) The amount and/ or the qualification achieved prior to leaving the educational system predicated in most instances the type of occupation that the individual could engage in.

5.7 Summary

This chapter dealt with the years preceding mature participation in college. There were several aims in this chapter; firstly it offered a template of the socio economic background of all participants, it then associated the level of education that they had attained (emphasis at this stage being on participation in the system rather than attainment of credentials) with their SEG of origin background in order to probe any correlation between both factors. Then connections were probed between three factors: SEG of origin- education- adult SEG, to consider whether for these participants, education could be said to have facilitated social mobility. Evidence of downward and upward social mobility have been noted, leading to consideration of other issues that

had been raised in interview; the importance of having supportive agents in the years when nested in the family of origin and the interplay between power and gender in perpetuating social norms. The impact of negative attitude within the formative years has contributed to a model build of the decoupling of parallel progression. The next chapter will consider the factors which caused the participants to evaluate their lives and deviate from their particular trajectories and the experiences resulting from such deviations.

6 Chapter Six- The Bridging Years

> Human forebears evolved into a sentient agentic species. Their advanced symbolizing capacity enabled humans to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and make them unique in their power to shape their life circumstances and the course of their lives. (Bandura, 2006:164)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the social background of the participants in terms of their socialisation within and exposure to the potential influence of SEGs and of gender whilst in their family of origin, and during their adult year's pre university attendance. The chapter then went on to consider the importance of the power roles held within institutions and within the family and the impact of the behaviour of agents in powerful roles, on the development of attitude and behaviour (in terms of belief in self and belief in self in the educational sphere), for the individuals who were in their care. In building on this analysis, this chapter will concentrate on the stories of respondents in relation to: a) their experiences of deciding to go to college, b) the reasons which prompted them to deviate from their particular life trajectories at that time, c) their intentions in engaging in their education, and lastly, d) their experiences within the academy.

As a starting point, a lens is cast on determining the specific event(s) that occurred to propel the individual towards re-engaging in education. The theoretical approaches (discussed in chapter three) of Bandura (1982, 2001, 2006) and of Zajonc (2001) are particularly useful in attempting to explore these events. From the analysis of this part of the interview data, there emerged specific patterns as to the orientations of individuals towards education which I have expressed in the form of four typologies of orientation: Strategists, Fulfilment Seekers, Transformationalists and Builders. The second part of this chapter explores the experiences of these cohorts, which although a heterogeneous group, forms a minority group within the academy. To this end, the act of group belonging has been probed with the development of a group grid. This grid has helped to unpeel the notion of a college community and to establish recognition of the groups inherent within that community and to provoke discussion regarding the notion of belonging.

6.2 Initial decision making process

A thread running through this thesis is that adults are engaged in a life-cycle and a life-trajectory which are influenced by the social system in which they are embedded (Hopper 1981, Bourdieu et al., 1977). However, whilst adults are shaped by these influences and exhibit behaviour informed by these influences, they are none the less agents equipped with the ability to change, they do not have to be passive participants in their own life stories but rather active contributors (Beck & Beck- Gernsheim, 2001). Critical and fortuitous events are often the causes that pivot the individual along a

deviated pathway. These events, as described by Bandura (2001, 2006), refer to unique confluences of occurrences that can alter the course of particular lives. They do not have to be momentous in nature, however they are considered seismic moments which act as catalysts in facilitating change in the direction of an individual's life. In this study they have been something as simple as happenstance, for instance a chance meeting [Kate], listening to a guest speaker in a library [Greta], seeing an advertisement [Daithi]), or more contrived and facilitated structurally (attending some form of educational programme and being present when an outreach rep., from a university visited) as was the case for example, for Seansher, Tara and Tash. This is not to say that the decision to apply for a college programme was made lightly, rather it was that the fortuitous/critical event served as a catalyst for either conscious or subliminal need for change within their individual lives.

It can be argued that prior to being in a position of acting on a critical or fortuitous event, the individual must have inured, to some degree, towards education. Zajonc (1968, 2001) has offered the mere exposure effect as a means of understanding how attitudes are formed, put simply, the more you are exposed to an idea, the more you develop a positive attitude towards it. Attitudes are the manner in which we evaluate something, which in turn is influenced by socialising norms, and therefore of relevance when considering the aims of those returning to education. Analysis of the data suggests that the aims of those participants, returning to education have included intellectual, economic and employment purposes, suggesting that their attitudes, in part, could be regarded as being in accord with the intentions of dominant discourses

at global and national levels as to the purposes of lifelong education and the need for upskilling.

In summary, it can be argued that translating an aim into action, especially when it causes deviation from a particular life-trajectory, has to be prefaced by a favourable attitude towards education in addition to an (critical or fortuitous) event or series of events. However for each individual these event(s) fed into a particular need that was present at a particular time. Moving beyond this step , and exploring the "game plan" of these individuals in going to college, and questioning what their aims were in making this journey, patterns of orientation became evident. These patterns were separated into four groups and are presented in the next section.

6.3 Typologies of orientation

Having identified a pattern of orientation within the data, that transcended gender, age and social background, I decided to group the participants into typologies according to their orientation. These typologies are not carried through the thesis whole, as I did not consider them to be the most efficacious way in which to present all of the findings emanating from the data analysis. However understanding the orientations of the individual towards education in some measure addresses the key question as to why they decided to engage in education as a way of effecting change in their lives. These typologies are based on theoretical analysis, however I do not claim

that these are exhaustive, but they are useful in showing that disparate people may share similar orientations in approaching a common experience.

Table 6-1: Typologies of Orientation

Fulfilment Seekers	Builders	Transformationalists	Strategists
Having a sense of something missing in life. Engaging in education to satisfy a need for knowledge and intellectual growth.	Content enough with life. Seizing opportunity. Prove it could be done.	Unhappy with life. Availing of opportunity as it presents itself. Goal being to distance themselves from circumstance. Embark on hierarchy of opportunity.	Being deliberate in planning to go into education. Strategising and structuring their collegiate journey to maximise achieving preset goals.
Kate, Monamon, Annie, Linda, Josie	Greta, Tara, Tash, Martha, Mildred.	Seansher, Ray, Marymau, Anthony, Rita	Ursula, Gareth, Fianna, Maisie, Daithi, Kevin, Harry, Ned, Shiela

6.3.1 Fulfilment Seekers (Kate, Monamon, Annie, Linda, Josie)

Having a sense of something missing in life, does not necessarily mean that life was unhappy. There was a feeling that this was a necessary step to add a layer to the individual rather than being a stepping stone towards a preordained goal.

6.3.1.1 Education

There were various amounts of education attained and routes attended within this group. Kate, Annie, Linda and Josie all attended secondary school in the 1970s, Monamon attended secondary school in the 1960s. Kate, Monamon and Josie all completed their Leaving Certificate exams, Linda completed her Intermediate exam and Annie was taken out of school by her mother shortly before her Intermediate exam as a job had been found for her. Annie, Linda and Josie went to State secondary schools in their areas, Kate and Monamon both went to secondary schools outside of their local area, Monamon going to a private school. However as Monamon stressed, full secondary attendance in the 1960s predated free education and thus attendance required payment.

Only in Annie's family was there a complete disregard for education during her formative years. Annie had gone to six or seven different schools before the age of fifteen as "we moved a lot when I was a kid" (Annie, 9). As a consequence there were gaps in her knowledge and she was bullied by various teachers in the course of both her primary and brief secondary education. When her mother pulled her out of school (she had found Annie a job as an office junior) prior to her Intermediate certificate, Annie only felt relief, she felt she "was escaping" (Annie, 44).

The other four believed their parents to be supportive of education, although Linda qualified this by saying that although her father, in particular believed in education for

women, he didn't back it up with proactive behaviour such as asking about school or providing money for extra books and so forth.

Kate, Monamon, Linda and Josie had been aware of the status attached to education in their families of origin. Kate's father was in the Gardai and she talked about him studying at home so that he could take exams to rise up the ranks. Having attended a local primary school, she was transferred to a secondary school within the city, which attracted students from a variety of social backgrounds, many from middle class backgrounds. In this school (Regina)[48] it would have been fairly normal to proceed to third level, which would not necessarily have been the case in her locale:

> I had other friends outside of school because I lived in Tolby[49] ... I would have kept in touch with my friends from Tolby because they were girls I had grown up with ... and in Tolby it wasn't really the norm to go to college whereas in Regina it was it was different my peers in Regina they would have been a lot more wealthier and maybe a lot of their parents had gone to college whereas in **** that wasn't an option. (Kate, 39-43)

Kate therefore was in the somewhat unique position of having two normative peer reference groups, coming from different social backgrounds, the boundaries of which were permeable enough that she felt comfortable in, and retained friendships from both. She seemed secure in both social spheres, with a goal orientation towards

[48] Regina serves as pseudonym for the name of secondary school

[49] Pseudonym for area that Kate lived in with her family of origin.

education formed within her family and fostered as a comparative orientation (Hopper 1971) within her school normative group.

Monamon completed her Leaving certificate in 1965. Within her social milieu (father was a clerk, mother ran a guesthouse) in the Wicklow suburbs, if you had the money or got a scholarship or bursary and had the inclination, then you could go to college. It was as common to attend third level as it was not to do so. In her family her mother was very entrepreneurial in making money to help keep the family afloat, and to keep them all in school, but her focus in terms of long term education was placed on the male in the family. Similarly to Kate and Josie, Monamon would have liked to have gone to third level but all admitted that they didn't work hard enough in school:

> well I could have gone for a scholarship but I didn't bother. I would have worked a lot harder if I realised how it was done, but I didn't realise, I thought it came on your results and your results were just what they happened to be. (Monamon, 124-126)

6.3.1.2 Employment History

On leaving secondary school, both Annie and Linda got office work, Kate did a stint as a student language teacher in a convent school in abroad, worked in the clerical side of a travel business and eventually as a Garda. Monamon completed a secretarial course and then got a series of office jobs, and started up a small business as a stall holder. Common to all the women was a varied working career, one where they were open to

new experiences and seizing opportunities as they arose. At this stage they all evidenced a determinant of social mobility; a disposition that is amenable to change. In the case of Linda this was not straightforward. Although Linda availed of opportunities as they arose, she displayed status rigidity in terms of her consciousness of the differences between her social class background and that of her work colleagues, and over time, her children and her university peers. It is somewhat surprising that this sense of status rigidity was so resilient as she had been exposed to the potential for additional education in her years at school, was aware that she was clever, and had been employed in a clerical role in a stockbroker's office on leaving school:

> I got a phone call to say some stockbrokers in Dublin were looking for someone so that was totally out of the blue what would you expect coming from **** but I went and did the interview and I got the job and then worked there for six months and I hated every minute of it ... the two girls that were there were in their twenties ... they were grand but I felt totally like a duck out of water I just felt totally I didn't fit in. (Linda, 92-103).

Linda's next clerical job was in a hospital where she was a lot happier as "there were more ordinary people there you know" (Linda, 152). Linda's working life prior to entering college was a series of clerical or restaurant jobs punctuated with time at home rearing her family.

Annie had been removed from school by her mother, prior to the Intermediate exam, as she had found her a job as an office junior. From her very first job, at the age of fifteen, Annie was eager to learn:

> [I] was just a trainee basically you were starting at the bottom in an office and as time went on you realise, I realised I couldn't stay at the bottom. I had to start to move up if I was going to start to earn money....I realised that if I want to go anywhere I would have to start learning the ropes in the office so to speak. So then I decided that I would go to evening classes in the local college for typing and shorthand so I went to one of them ... then I could type ... I picked up experience. (Annie, 61-71).

The extent of her self-motivation is evident in the data, not only when recalling the lack of interest in any form of education in the home, but also in considering that the office environment of that time was very constrained with roles strictly defined and bounded:

> The manager didn't agree with my wanting to move up into that area. You could advance yourself just so far and that was it. So this was 1977, so I decided to look around I was very young. (Annie, 76-77)

Annie continued working in offices and doing courses for the next twenty years. In this manner she built up her technical skill set, retaining her drive and enthusiasm for

keeping her brain active. Despite her achievements she never believed that she would be capable of going to university, in large part down to the belief of her mother that you were having "notions" if you wanted to go to third level. From this perspective the effect of her mother (and her mother's opinion of what was appropriate for their social class), was acting as a blocking factor in impeding her from raising her level of achievement. Annie continued to work in various clerical capacities, taking time off at various stages for family reasons, and took various educational and leisure courses as interested her.

Both Kate and Monamon experienced variety in their working lives, Kate travelling as a teacher and working her way up the ranks in the Garda force. Monamon was willing to seize new experiences, moving from office work into merchandising and involvement in alternative health and healing therapies. Josie having availed of a network contact (her brother) worked her way up in a fast-paced and dynamic sector of the food industry, managing franchises throughout Ireland. Kate also threw herself wholeheartedly into her work:

> I got the job so not only had I got the job but I had been picked to go into one unit where they had been no women ... before ... and my boss said "you don't have to take it" and I said "why wouldn't I take it?" ... when I went in they wanted me to work in the office and basically I refused ... I gave them an ultimatum put me back on the streets or I will go back to uniform ... so they took me on board and let me out on the street and it was a bit difficult at first with the

> guys ... there weren't a lot of women in the Garda back then ... I had to prove myself, I had to defend myself ... I had come in after the training, and after the baby was born. They had all done the course and I hadn't. So I did the Uzi firearms course and the driving course and over time my colleagues came around. (Kate, 225-253)

With the exception of Josie, these women had a variety of jobs throughout their lives prior to re-engaging in fulltime education, and appeared to grasp opportunity for change as it came along as well as seek to promote the self in whatever venture they were engaged in at a particular time.

6.3.1.3 Personal Lives

What was common to all of these women, who differed on a spectrum of confidence from being extremely confident to lacking self-confidence, was their propensity for engaging in life and looking beyond work merely as a way to earn money, but also desiring a sense of fulfilment in their daily lives. All expressed a sense of themselves, even if only briefly, beyond that of being a wife and mother. Most of these women, with the exception of Kate, endured lean years during their marriage and worked to contribute to the family budget. Kate had been wealthy during her marriage but endured lean years post separation during her time in college. Annie worked part-time once her children came along and did night classes so that she could keep her brain active. Similarly Kate, Linda and Monamon had a variety of jobs during the course of their adult lives.

All members of this typology were married (Kate was unhappily married and went through a separation shortly before her course commenced) and had, with the exception of Kate, the support of their spouses in going to college. None of them engaged in paid work whilst in college, although Kate ran a guest house for a member of her family during the summer months. For the most part their families were supportive, although for all, with the exception of Monamon, their parenting role impacted, in some cases significantly, on their abilities to perform their roles as students:

> My daughter was going into sixth class and she was acting up. She was having a hard time with my going back into education. She was feeling very, very upset about the whole thing ... I think she thought I was abandoning her ... as well as my parents having problems with their health, so I asked could I take a year out ... and I was granted that. So I took the year out. (Annie, 10)

> I just had this old memory of running, leaving college to get home to be in time at the school. At this stage Mary was in special school and I was rushing home to be able to pick her up ... and also trying to get into the library and stay in the library ... I found it very hard to do that work ... and I had health problems as well. (Linda, 25)

> Oh God, yeah the shit hit the fan in third year. My youngest started having major problems and I would have availed of the counselling services and I also became very ill and had to go off books. I think it was a culmination of a lot of things, my separation was going through the courts and I repeated third year. (Kate, 394-396)

> I would come into college and then I would hopefully be there to collect the kids at 2.30 or else I would ask someone else to do it, you know yourself, depending on lectures, and they there was secondary school, had to be picked up do, that, that was at 4.00 and whatever they had to go to, football, Gaelic, whatever, it was, so basically you'd get home, and then everything would have to be done, you know around 9.30. Then I would tend to do my own stuff. (Josie, 318-323)

6.3.1.4 Critical/Fortuitous Events

The events that propelled these women into college were in the main very simply about being in the right place at the right time. The fortuitous event that propelled Annie to consider applying for college was the encouragement of a sister who had been educated through the firm that she worked for and who was familiar with the TAP course. Annie applied and was accepted onto this foundation course. From there she applied to and was accepted at two colleges, NUI Maynooth and Trinity College. At this juncture the aspect of status attached to Trinity College is evidenced in the

comments made by agents within the structure; a tutor on the TAP programme told Annie that:

> It was famous the world over and she said, "It will get you anywhere in the world" and she said, "It is great to get it on your CV" she said, "You have to come to Trinity". (Annie, 365)

In this instance the tutor who gave this advice had links to and working knowledge of other universities in the Irish domain. From a Hopperian perspective, the status attached to an object enhances it as a goal to orientate towards. In the stories of many of the respondents, the status attached to Trinity College is evident:

> It was simply because Trinity only took the cream and my brother had said sure apply for Trinity and I said I am. (Kate, 352)

Status therefore is bestowed on Trinity College not only from within the core of the group (an academic), but also from members of other groups (public). The status attached to Trinity College may have emanated from many domains; its world ranking on the league tables of universities, its long history, its position in the centre of the capital city enclosed by tall walls and railings. If there are many strands contributing to establishing a status around an object, there is a risk of diluting the desirability of that object and thus reducing its desirability as a goal, yet this does not happen with respect to an education at Trinity College. If one succeeded in getting a place in this institution, the accompanying assumption was that you had scored something of a

coup, that you had achieved something extraordinary, irrespective of the course that you were doing. This suggests that the status was not merely attached to the usefulness of a university degree in pursuing occupations, but to the institution itself. Yet as will be seen later in this section, for some the status of the institution was of little consequence (Monamon) and for Linda was considered off putting.

Kate's work life had been varied but her last fulltime job some years prior to her attendance as college had been in the police force. She was in the early batches of women to join the Gardai and challenged assumptions, actively breaking down boundaries about the work that was deigned to be suitable for women within that organisation. Although she tried to juggle employment in the job with having a family, she found it was too difficult and eventually took a career break but never went back.

> They are a full time job and my husband had set up a business ... well I had given birth to three children and I couldn't really ask someone else to mind them so there you are, but I wanted to go back, it was my identity I did not want to become a stay at home mum. (Kate, 267-271)

Kate spent the intervening years rearing her children bringing them to extra classes and taking some classes herself. Her husband's business was very successful and they had a comfortable lifestyle. However, over time the marriage disintegrated and additional problems manifested themselves in her husband's extended family. By chance Kate met a woman who had done an access course in UCD and gone on to third

level. This chance meeting was critical/fortuitous event which propelled her into applying for third level. Her first step was to apply and be accepted into this access course. She did not have the support of her husband:

> That was a decision I had to make. My husband didn't like the decision ... I just thought ... I will mind me and mine and I suppose for me going to the course was just to see, I didn't feel like me, I was Ralph's wife and the children's mom. I wasn't me, I didn't have an identity. I had lost it, I wasn't aware of it at the time, so I applied to do the UCD course and I loved it, I absolutely loved it. My father died then and that didn't help because we were very close ... six months later I walked out on my husband. I was still in the course, I was halfway through the course. (Kate, 304-312).

Kate had a friend from a language course who arranged for her to attend a first and final year French lecture in UCD. Once she had done this she knew that she was intellectually capable of doing a degree:

> I was in heaven and I realised not only could I do it but I would be happy doing it. (Kate, 320-321)

Throughout Kate's story there is evidence of planning more so than projected planning as would be the case for Strategists. She took stock of events and then availed of opportunity and of network agents, in order to inform and advance herself in this sphere. She had a number of serious difficulties with her family, a contentious

separation, problems with finance and in time with her confidence in doing the work, which impacted on her physical and mental health, but once she got into Trinity she was determined to prove, especially to her husband, that she could do it. It took her six years overall to complete her degree.

It was a structural event, the advent of free fees that started Monamon thinking about applying for college. Prior to that she had been getting on with life, trying different jobs, starting small companies, often thinking about going to college, in terms of getting a loan, but then something else would happen that would require money or attention. Her knowledge of the status attached to Trinity College was informed by the experiences of her daughter, who had briefly attended Trinity before changing courses and colleges. Her daughter hated it. She found her peers snobby and unhelpful. Monamon's husband was a secondary teacher and Monamon herself was a writer and entrepreneur. Therefore her daughter, aside from her own education, would have been exposed to the type of tool kit necessary to operate within an academic environment. The status of the college, or the experiences of her daughter in terms of group rejection, did not deter Monamon from applying to Trinity College. She had two possible goals in mind, getting a degree in psychology in Trinity or doing journalism in DIT. After attending open days in both colleges, she opted for Trinity, intending to do a Masters afterwards. She chose to do the Leaving Certificate (twice) rather than go down the mature route. She was not successful in gaining entry to the psychology course and opted for philosophy instead. The status of the Trinity name or the experiences of her daughter acted as neither an incentive nor deterrent, she based her decision on what she learned about the courses and the colleges on those open

days. An additional incentive, particular to Monamon, was the location of Trinity, she suffered from arthritis and the availability of buses close by played a small part in her decision.

When Linda's youngest daughter started school, Linda gained part-time work through participation in a community work scheme. This type of work suited her, as it gave her a sense of self in addition to facilitating the time off that she needed in order to attend to her daughter's special needs. It was whilst working in the pastoral sector of a university that she came into contact with mature students. Prior to then, she had not known that such a possibility existed. Hence her first step in her own journey in education, the creation of awareness, occurred through happenstance:

> A lot of mature students would come to the meeting room and I would make them tea ... and ask them what would they be doing, and have a chat with them, and I would think God isn't that a brilliant thing to be doing. (Linda, 14)

The next step, moving from awareness to action, happened when she saw an advertisement in her daughters' school for parents who wanted more involvement in education. This was the fortuitous event that heralded the start of involvement with a series of courses which honed an interest in psychology, thus building upon Linda's informal knowledge of health pertaining to her daughter's disability. Hopper et al., (1975) state that re-entering education is a combination of situational and personal factors, the latter including the intensity of a person's

achievement orientation and the intensity of a person's economic and status orientations. This was not evident in Linda's story. Rather she stumbled in and stumbled on, within the educational arena, constantly doubting herself and her ability. Eventually she ended up doing a foundation course in the National College of Ireland. Linda greatly enjoyed this course, particularly the formal aspect, attending lectures and completion of assignments.

> You felt like you were getting a life for yourself. (Linda, 15)

As part of this course, students were strongly encouraged to apply to continue their education by application to a degree level course. Linda applied, and was accepted following aptitude tests and personal interview, onto a degree course in Trinity. Only seven out of several hundred applications were accepted so this was quite an achievement and should have given some comfort to Linda as to her ability to participate in the course. However, Linda was somewhat troubled by the thoughts of coming to Trinity:

> I said "Oh I've gotten Trinity and I don't know what to do" and he said, well he wouldn't have been pushy now, he wouldn't have, but he said "well now you really you can't really not take that, how can you not take Trinity". How could you not take Trinity? (Linda, 634-636)

Linda had been accepted by three institutions, and was very troubled about taking a place at Trinity College. Those in her home sphere (citing her husband above); all thought that she should take the course. She left it until the last day to confirm her acceptance with the admissions office:

> Trinity wasn't for the likes of us, like there was this thing no one I had ever known of my age had ever gone to College...even during the first year I felt I should have gone to Blanch or Pats. I wouldn't have felt so out of place (Linda, 20).

Linda appeared to have a specific opinion about what was right or appropriate for her and a different opinion regarding what was right and appropriate for her children, all (with the exception of her child with disabilities) of whom went on to third level institutions.

> Okay, my sons went to College, but that was like, that was, that was different, like you wanted that for them, and they were reared to that. You had this plan. (Linda, 21)

She exhibited a high degree of status rigidity in terms of her own suitability in going to Trinity despite being aware that she had won her place in her course against stiff opposition from other candidates. She had the support of her husband and children yet:

> It took me a while, it took me a good while to get over that, to get over that fear... I would be out of my depth, that I would not feel well ... that it would be too much too much work. (Linda, 22-27)

In the beginning she felt very "lost and out of place" (Linda, 29). In this she was experiencing a status dilemma, in feeling that she did not belong in the community being "on the margin of the social spaces of the groups involved" (Hopper et al., 1975:35). However, over time, she made friends among the mature community in college. Her goal was to continue her education and to inform herself regarding her subjects. She found juggling her role as a student and her role as a mother of a child with disabilities particularly difficult. Linda found her personal tutor of great assistance in negotiating her journey through university. It took her five years to complete her degree:

> I felt I did a day's work before I got in there, getting everything ready for nine o'clock and running home again ... I found the first few months particularly hard. I remember I was under pressure the whole time and I used to be crying and asking what the hell am I doing. (Linda, 23)

Linda displays a significant amount of status rigidity in her own attitude towards herself and what is appropriate for a woman from her social background and age. Yet this is not shared by her husband, her children, her tutors, her lecturers or those who interviewed her for her place on her course. Mobility seems to be the taken for

granted right she expected for her children, yet not a goal or desire for herself. Mobility was not expressed in terms of moving through social strata, but the right to engage in a life of one's choosing, one which you are equipped for and have an expectation of enjoying.

6.3.1.5 Section Summary

The fulfilment seekers form a cohort drawn from a variety of different SEG of origin. Their own lives prior to deciding to reengage with education represent a divergent field of occupations. All were married, and (with the exception of Kate) had the support of their husbands and family. That is not to say that tensions did not arise within the families in terms of providing practical support, for instance in terms of childcare or housework, but it was not mentioned to any significant degree. Kate and Linda both needed longer than four years to complete their degrees. This was precipitated in both cases by a clash of roles of student and parent, where the parent role took precedence over the student role, and consequently both women suffered crises of confidence in their ability to perform academically. In both instances the women were helped greatly by the supportive group in the academy (specifically the personal tutor) and in Kate's case by the formal group in terms of persistent encouragement by certain members of the academic group. Viewing these two women's experience through a Hopperian lens, suggests that both went through a personal struggle, a form of instrumental adjustment, with manifest anxiety which impacted on their achievement orientations. Monamon, Annie and Josie completed their degree courses in the four years allocated. Monamon had physical health

difficulties which highlighted the permeance of informal group boundaries, citing frequently the help and inclusionary tactics of her student peers. Although all these women sought employment post-degree, employment had not been the prime motivator in initially applying to become a university student.

6.3.2 Builders (Greta, Tash, Tara, Mildred, Martha)

This section explores the experiences of "builders" who came from different social backgrounds but shared the unique feature that all were relatively happy with the way their lives were progressing, yet nevertheless grasped the chance to engage in education when the opportunity came along. Going to university therefore was not an "unrequited passion" or a path rejected when younger, rather it was a chance to be taken at this particular stage in their life-trajectory. Tara did not talk much about her schooling in the interview; however the other four individuals did not express dissatisfaction with their experiences in education when younger. Three of the group were married women with children. Two were single women who had retired from jobs in the Civil Service. These two women were in their seventies and their orientation to education was in keeping with that described by Hopper et al., (1975) in being more focused on leisure and adjustment to retirement.

6.3.2.1 Personal Experiences

Tara and Tash came from a working class social background and had engaged in courses for adults run in local community centres. These courses were State funded. Tara spoke of her area as being hugely disadvantaged and her own involvement in

getting courses and facilities into the area, which in the first instance consisted of a donated double decker bus, childcare courses being run upstairs and education courses run downstairs. Following on from the success of this venture Tara got a grant for computers for a community centre. No one knew how to use them however, so Tara decided to go on a course to learn how to operate them. However her local centre did not run a bespoke computer course:

> They said they didn't do a course just on computers, you had to do it as part of a deal. So I said to myself I'd take the deal, and then I just wouldn't go, I'd just take the computers ... and then ... I found myself staying for the other courses and before I knew it I had sat my Leaving Cert so. (Tara, 29-33)

Tara had no particular ambition at this stage to go any further in education, but a guidance counsellor on the course strongly encouraged her and motivated her to come into Trinity and attend an access open day:

> I didn't think I would, but she says to me to go in and see the access programme. So I did, I came in and seen the access programme and I applied. Somebody there just blew me away. She was studying law and had three kids while she was doing the degree ... so yeah, absolutely if she can do it I can do it. So here I am. (Tara, 45-49)

Both these women were introduced to the notion of continuing education through State structural facilitation within their respective communities. The courses these women attended acted as bridging factors (Hopper et al., 1975) facilitating movement between one situation and another, even if the women had not originally orientated themselves towards formal engagement in third level education.

Tash had a very busy and happy working life prior to having children but stayed at home to rear her children herself even though it was a really big struggle financially. Once her youngest was in playschool she availed of the courses that were run for parents in her local area. She did all manner of courses ranging from pottery and interior design to helping with homework classes to bring parents up to speed with the current trends in teaching maths and so forth thus exemplifying a full range of learning from pleasure and leisure to formal academic knowledge:

> You know sums had changed, the way they did them, I thought, I you know, I will go to that because, you know, I was absolutely completely ignorant of the real literacy problem among adults at the time ... I mean, when I went up to do it, I ended up helping on it. I mean there were parents who literally could not read or write ... it really surprised me and made me think a bit more about education and how lucky I was. (Tash, 238-258)

Tash engaged in an adult literacy course which enabled her to work as a tutor helping develop reading and writing skills of others. At this juncture she had started to become aware of education and educational possibilities. From there, she decided to

hone up on her computer skills, and so went to her local public library and taught herself rudimentary computer skills. Thinking of returning to paid work, she felt that she needed more instruction to become computer literate and enquired at her local community centre. Her subsequent experience echoed that of Tara's in that she could only do a computer course as part of a back to education course. Whilst on this course an outreach representative from TAP came in and gave a talk about the access programme.

These two women followed similar paths, both having different objectives, yet both being suggestive of instrumental orientation.[50] Tara specifically engaged in education as a tool to being able to engage in the community. Although Tash used her literacy ability to help out in her community, her engagement in education was always with a mind to equipping herself to re-engage in the workforce. The community routes that these women followed facilitated exposure to further education in the form of outreach representation and promotion of access courses. This allowed them to orientate towards further education to degree level as a goal, which they would otherwise not have considered. Both were accepted on to the TAP course, both were subsequently successful in being accepted onto their degree courses.

[50] Hopper et al.,(1975) spoke of two particular types of orientation: evaluative and instrumental. The former referring to the valuation of learning in itself and the latter referring to the valuation of learning as a means to a future goal.

6.3.2.2 Possession of Capital

It could be argued therefore that the status attached to the social background of these women, together with their limited secondary education formed a cultural capital. This cultural capital was of considerable value in that it facilitated an alternative to the normative route (being directly after finishing second level) of accessing third level education. These alternative routes were put in place by the State and in Hopperian terms facilitated systemic correction in that those capable of undergoing a third level education got the chance to do so.

Greta had completed her Leaving Certificate and gained a diploma qualification as a lab technician. She was widowed with children. She had a difficult life in the sense that her husband developed multiple sclerosis (MS) relatively young in life and she had to assist him in his GP practice and ultimately became his prime carer. Following his death, she had the opportunity to return to full time work as a lab technician; however she decided to take some time to focus on herself before making decisions on her future. Whilst a full time carer, she had been careful to be mindful of herself and had employed a nurse to help her with caring duties. She had used her private time to attend various interest classes, one of which was a French class. She also made frequent use of her local library, attending many of the events held there. It was attendance at a talk giving by a visiting academic that opened her mind to returning to education:

> They would get people in to talk at the local library. Another good public service, a readers' group, and we had Declan Kilberd, the academic, anyway he was coming in to talk to us. We did Midnight's Children, Salman Rushdie, and I had read it before and read it again now, and he started talking about it, and I thought gosh there were a whole pile of different levels that I know nothing about, and all these thing went into my head, when I was trying to think what to do, and I wanted to learn more. It actually enriches your life to learn like to look critically at things. (Greta, 140-146)

Greta then researched the process of coming to third level and did an access preparation course in UCD. She applied for a number of institutions but accepted Trinity College's offer to read a language and Sociology. She was very clear on her reasons for this:

> The year, 2000, it was free because I had never been to college before. So that was a consideration and I was doing it for the pleasure of it and if I came to Trinity I would get four years out of it whereas in UCD I would only get three, and I could get a bus into Trinity so that's how I ended up in Trinity. (Greta, 173-176).

Greta had a stock of economic and cultural capital prior to coming to Trinity. Her own education was beyond Leaving Certificate in that she had been trained and credentialised as a lab technician. Her husband was a GP in private practise. Although

widowed, she was financially able to take "time out" in considering her future. Hopper et al., (1975) noted that education was valued not only for its usefulness in determining future positions in the stratification system but also in reflecting particular personal values. Greta was quite clear that her foray into third level was for her own self development, regarding it as "brain training not job training," and wanting the experience of college for herself:

> I know this sounds terrible but I didn't kill myself. I went to college for the experience of going and doing it and my objective every year was to get through so that I could come back the next year, but mm and I did get, I finished the language first and then I continued and did the Sociology for the last year ... but I always went away for holidays and things like because I didn't want it to be the whole of my life either, you know, I wanted to keep other things going. (Greta, 323-328)

Greta left college with a first class honours degree. She appreciated the content of the course, the company of her peers both mature and traditional, and also the location of Trinity, being able to stay in town and use her student discount to go to the theatre with friends. She wholeheartedly found it a positive experience, achieving her aim of enjoying the process, and gaining the ability to think critically. However, education also changed her, in that she decided to build on her undergraduate knowledge and develop a skill by engaging in study at Master's level, now hoping to gain employment in a research setting. Therefore her goal orientation with respect to education had

evolved and her normative expectations changed. In addition, her stock of economic and cultural capital had increased.

6.3.2.3 Education in retirement

Mildred and Martha had retired from work in the Civil Service, having worked in many different departments over the course of their working lives. Neither of the women were married or had children. Mildred had completed her education up to Leaving Certificate, Martha had left prior to the Leaving Certificate to take a place in a domestic economy school. Both would have said that education was highly regarded within their families of origin and were happy with the choices they made post secondary school. Both made the point that education was expensive then and that there were no grants in those days. Martha had done various courses in economics, politics and social science, French and German throughout her lifetime some to diploma level. When asked why she hadn't undertaken a degree course earlier she offered two explanations, one working outside the Dublin area and the other being the demands of her job leaving little time for anything else. This was an interesting reply in that similarly to Greta, she was noting the importance of locale. If you are not situated geographically to engage in education, then you are lacking in the status effect of space and place, thus penalising you in terms of structural facilitation. Martha's job had been intellectually demanding and time intensive and she worried that in retirement she would not be mentally active:

> You felt that ... when retired you weren't subscribing to anything and that ... you would get into lazy habits of getting up late ... you know if you feel you should contribute, like you can't be on holidays forever ... you feel quite guilty, you know, there is a sort of guilt thing built into the human spirit. (Martha, 232-237)

Martha chose Trinity over other institutions as it was in the city centre, thus easy to commute to, she had free travel in addition to the "free fees" waiver scheme, thus she would be able to keep her costs low. An important factor in her decision to go to university was to challenge herself intellectually and to be able, at last, to engage in classes during the daytime:

> I did a lot of diplomas in my life ... and I felt they were lacking in something, recognition really, and I don't know what I wanted the recognition for ... I didn't think they were serious enough or demanding enough so I said, "No I would go the whole hog this time and see," and the other thing that convinced me was that they were day courses, you could do them in the day time. (Martha, 248-255)

Mildred's experiences were similar in that she followed a normal pattern in her youth of applying and being accepted for the civil service upon leaving school. She had a busy job which involved moving around the country and meetings after hours so did not feel she could have incorporated work and study at degree level whilst employed.

Her reasons for engaging in a degree course stemmed from a need, when retired a few months, for mental stimulation. She also wanted to indulge in a lifelong passion for history, and chose Trinity as she felt the degree course on offer superior to others available in different institutions. It was evident, particularly in the stories of the retired members of the sample, that an interest in the subject matter was paramount in their re-engagement with education. Specifically, orientation towards third level was evaluative rather than instrumental. Consequently there was little worry about "fitting in" with younger students, the worry for Mildred was in being cognitively slower at this time in life:

> I knew it would take more of an effort and if I was straight out of school, at this stage of my life you don't have the retention that a young person would have, or the mental abilities, so you would have to keep reading and reading. (Mildred, 211-213)

6.3.2.4 Orientations

Of this cohort, only Tash expressed a specifically instrumental orientation, engaging in education with a view to upskilling herself for the employment market. It is important to note that Tash was not seeking necessarily to gain employment at a higher level in the occupational hierarchy, merely to make sure she possessed skills that would allow her to re engage in the work force. Consequently her orientation could be classified as non mobile and thus in keeping with Hopper et al's., (1975) findings that those who

are non mobile show instrumental orientation towards economic and status rewards. However, when completing the TAP she took the advice of choosing a degree course in a subject she enjoyed rather than in one that was specifically work orientated. She was glad to have done so and continued her education up to doctorate level. Tash was subsequently engaged in an administrative capacity, which she had mixed feelings about because, although delighted with some aspects of the job, she felt she was back doing what she had started out doing- office work thus experiencing situs rather than horizontal mobility, suggesting that although her initial orientation had not been directed towards upward social mobility she may have come to value some form of social flexibility if not mobility.

Greta, Martha, Mildred and Tara had mainly evaluative orientations in engaging in education. From this group, Greta and Tash both took directions that they would not necessarily have orientated towards when commencing their degree courses. Greta continued her education to Master's level and through job placement (compulsory element of the Social Research course) gained fulltime employment as an office administrator, Tash continued on to complete PhD study and gained administrative work in a university department. Tara became a teacher in a community programme. Both Martha and Mildred completed Master's courses in their subjects. Therefore, although education initially was the goal in itself, it became a conduit to other goals that the cohort formed through their four years at Trinity.

6.3.2.5 Summary

This group (builders) are comprised of a group of people from diverse social backgrounds and ages. Two were single, two were married, and one was widowed. All had the support of their families in engaging in education. All lived active lives, either in terms of their private lives, or in terms of their working environments. This cohort appeared reasonably content with life, but all were very open to engaging in education when the opportunity came along. The same could be said for employment. Following on from their degree studies, those who were not retired, seized the occasion to work when opportunity presented itself, suggesting that personal traits are important in adapting to situations. All five women completed their degrees in four years. Notable in this cohort is that they continued to display the flexibility that was evidenced in their dispositions when they originally seized the opportunity presented to engage in third level education.

6.3.3 Transformationalists (Seansher, Ray, Marymau, Anthony, Rita)

Transformationalists were not engaging in education to effect a complete transformation of self and circumstance. Rather, this group were unhappy in their lives or with aspects of their lives. For them, the opportunity of engaging in education was a chance to take control and thus orchestrate significant change to their circumstances and/or how they felt about themselves. They had dissimilar backstories.

6.3.3.1 Structural facilitation

Ray had a supportive family, was married, employed, and was a "hands on" father. He was deeply frustrated with the restrictions of his job and seized the opportunity presented by the Nursing Commission to upskill whilst continuing working:

> I had done a self development course anyway so that got my mind in the right space. So it was an opportunity. So I just took it because in many ways there are so few opportunities with regards to your financial restraints, with regard to your family, and I have learnt in self development work that if you have less money you have to take the opportunities that are available to you, rather than wait for the opportunities that you want, because you have to get moving, and if you get moving the opportunities start to open up. (Ray, 164-169)

His comment evidences pragmatism, in that he could only perform his role of sole financial provider if he retained his role of frustrated and trapped worker. He was not in a position to create his own opportunities as this would have meant reneging on some, or all, of his other roles. Therefore he was reliant on structural facilitation to provide him with opportunity to effect change in his some part of his life:

> The Commission of Nursing was, it aimed if you like, to professionalise nursing in a way that it hadn't been professionalised,

and it enabled nurses to start following different career pathways.

(Ray, 138-140)

Once engaged on this route he was part of a network, the members of whom have signalled themselves as amenable to change. Therefore his normative and comparative groups were similar in expectation and in goal setting. This educational route was used by the Commission of Nursing to effect substantial change to the pedagogy of nursing and thus those engaged on the route were best placed to effect structural change and accept self change. Ray is an exemplar of this in moving from a career as a nursing practioner to a successful academic career. His trajectory, incorporating work and studying enabled him to continue supporting his family and to take the opportunity to change direction in his career. He credits the personal development work that he had done throughout his life in being hugely important in preparing him to recognise and seize opportunities as they arise. Ray's experience exemplifies Hopper's theory (1981) in that he engaged in education as a way to change his life, not only by changing his position within a stratification system, but also by altering how others valued him, gaining both status and economic rewards commensurate with his education and rank.

I was at the stage in my life when I realised that the only way to get through a midlife crisis was to educate myself. That was one of the main pieces that I got. (Ray, 206-207).

In Ray's story there is evidence of both egoistic and fraternalistic deprivation. Initially he felt trapped, in a low paying job with little autonomy and little opportunity to advance in his career. As he engaged with the education process he expressed dissatisfaction (thus experiencing fraternalistic deprivation), with the broader fate of his colleagues trapped in the same system and appreciative of the Nursing Commission's focus in professionalising the occupation.

6.3.3.2 Significant others

In telling her story, Marymau made frequent references to the impact of two women, her grandmother and a particular teacher, and how they shaped her life, encouraging her to question and to challenge and encouraging in her an interest in Science. Many aspects of her life appear to have been very challenging: her work as a primary teacher in a deprived rural area where there was little respect for education, an extremely tumultuous marriage resulting in protracted and bitter divorce proceedings. Marymau seems to have always been tenacious and determined in her endeavours even if it meant going against social norms. As a young woman she was an ardent campaigner for divorce which set her against the Church, and was detrimental to her employment and her standing in her local community. Retirement gave her the opportunity to indulge in her passion for science which she had put to one side during her adult life. Her adult children had not been particularly keen as they thought she would not be up to the knowledge:

> My children would say to me you are in the ark with Noah when you did it. You don't know what you are talking about. (Marymau, 631-632)

She began by doing some Open University courses, but then decided to sit the aptitude test and see would she be accepted onto a Trinity Science course. She was successful in her application, and in the main was able for the rigors of the subject. However, problems in her personal life and what she considers poor advice from her personal tutor had her accept a pass degree after three years. Unlike Martha and Mildred, Marymau saw the chance to engage in an education in retirement not only as an advantageous opportunity to re-ignite a passion, but to distance herself from the perceived norm of how she as an older woman should be spending her time. She viewed retirement as the opportunity to ready herself to work in fields other than teaching and to keep her brain active. She was very conscious of a social homogenisation of older people as being staid, religious, and conformist, citing examples of visiting nursing homes where:

> There were some people there with the mental capacity and they were sitting there doing nothing. (Marymau, 1328-1329)

Despite her efforts Marymau was unable to gain any work in a voluntary or paid capacity in a related area, and in this she was disappointed. Of the four components of Hopper's goal orientation, (aspiration, anticipation, normative expectation and achievement) Marymau was deficient in normative expectation, in that social norms

seem to have been rigid and boundaries impenetrable with regard to age more so than social group, thus preventing Marymau from gaining an occupation (and thus any status or economic reward) commensurate with her qualification.

6.3.3.3 Negativity in the intimate Social Sphere

Seansher and Anthony both had troubled upbringings, citing dysfunctional families many times in their interviews. Whereas Seansher had the support of his mother, Anthony had no support and in addition was subject to severe bullying in both primary and secondary school resulting in a mental breakdown. Seansher spent ten years, mainly unemployed, battling depression before a critical event occurred, the death of a close family member. This event impacted on him greatly and forced him to take stock of his life. He looked at what was available in his local area, joined classes and from there seized all opportunities to engage in education. By participating in education at a local level, Seansher was part of a group who were encouraged to progress in education and shown opportunities that were available within the system, to the extent that he was equipped to choose between a Btech degree programme and an Irish degree programme.

Following years of mental anguish, culminating in a nervous breakdown, Anthony, as part of his rehabilitation, became aware of and accepted onto a research team for a third level university and developed a high level of knowledge and expertise in his field. By participation in education at a university level, the quality of Anthony's research work was highly appreciated by the academics who required it to inform and

bring fresh information to their subject courses, which was in the area he wished to study. However, despite applying many times for a place on a degree programme, he was never accepted.

It could be argued, that Anthony's experiences were contrary to Seansher's in that his network effectively rejected him as a member of the group proper, maintaining impermeable boundaries around the education route. His goal orientation was effectively blocked anomogenically and comparatively. However, an important member of the core group, a project leader, encouraged him to capitalise on a rare find in his work and directed him towards two experts in the area in Trinity College. Such was the depth of Anthony's knowledge that they thought he was educated at post-graduate level. They helped him with the application process for an undergraduate programme, and although he did not succeed in his first application, he did in his second. He credits them with being of great support throughout his time at Trinity and in trying to forge a career in his chosen field.

6.3.3.4 Recession Effect

Rita had worked her way up in creative administration and event management in the cultural world, working in the UK and in Ireland. She enjoyed her work greatly but found opportunities dwindling with the onset of the Irish recession. She noted too, a greater propensity for credentials to be required when applying for jobs, and was beginning to feel that her age (40s) was mediating against her in her search for employment.

> I was beginning to get the message and I suppose by the time we are coming to '99 I thought how long will I have to keep on doing this, you know, being piped at the post all the time ... I am assuming it was me age because each time a younger person was appointed ... I was only aware of that in absolute reality when I had applied for job ... and I realised I hadn't been called to the interview because I hadn't got a degree, even though I was actually running a theatre ... so I thought right ... and the other thing was, well, if I go to College and the specialisation that I choose is more geared towards my political gene, my political DNA, then I can apply for a wide range of jobs. It means I can spread myself further that was my logic. (Rita, 327-346)

In addition, Rita's mother became very ill and she elected to take time off to help with her care. This confluence of events primed Rita that this was the time to make a change in her life and come to college. She was clear in what she wanted as an outcome, so set her goal accordingly, doing her research thoroughly, choosing to read Sociology and Social Policy at Trinity. Unfortunately problems in her personal life intruded in her studies and meant that she needed an extra year to complete her degree. On completing she became seriously ill and had to delay her search for occupation. At the time of the interview she held a voluntary post at a very senior level in a charity body. She enjoyed the contents of her course, and achieved her degree but has been unable to secure paid employment:

> I sometimes think from time to time that if I hadn't gone to college and if I had just pursued persisted in looking for a job then maybe I would have got a job. (Rita, 916-918)

6.3.3.5 Summary

Ultimately, education did not transform the lives of Anthony and Rita in the manner in which they hoped when they orientated themselves towards education. Both Seansher and Rita had been able to embed themselves in many aspects of college life, whereas Anthony, though comfortable in his academic endeavours, found socialising a struggle, feeling for the most part an outsider and feeling that lack of finance compounded these feelings when mixing with "South Dublin Trinitites." Although Seansher gained employment in his chosen field it was primarily due to being alerted by a contact in a network of friends, although he felt his degree of particular use in his occupation. Although education had equipped them with knowledge and credentials, other situational and dispositional attributes impeded the transformation, in terms of occupation that Rita, Anthony and Marymau had hoped for.

6.3.4 Strategists (Ursula, Gareth, Fianna, Maisie, Daithi, Kevin, Harry, Ned, Shiela)

The orientations of this group towards education are most in keeping with the main thrust of international and national policies discussed in earlier chapters. Their orientation was not to education as a goal in itself. Education was a necessary conduit towards a specific occupational goal. This group comprises members aged from early

twenties to late forties. Of this group four already held primary degrees, three had completed the Leaving Certificate and had additional qualifications and one had completed her Intermediate Certificate. Each member of this group had been very deliberate in choosing to re-engage in education. All had been leading busy lives either working or rearing families prior to entering their degree programmes.

6.3.4.1 Education Amount

Four people had completed a primary degree directly after secondary school as part of a normative sequential progression in the life-cycle. Of those four, Gareth (engineering), Ursula (pharmacy) and Harry (teaching) had all worked in their respective fields. The fourth degree holder, Ned, had been quite strategic in his choices as it had always been his intention to pursue a career in physiotherapy. He did not secure enough points in his Leaving Certificate to gain a place on such a degree course, so he availed of a sports scholarship to an American university, where he structured his primary degree to include as many relevant science related modules as possible, with the aim of applying to study physiotherapy as a mature student, on his return from the United States. Kevin Q was a Chinese national who came over to Ireland to improve the standing of his education. He wanted to build on his knowledge of maths and computers, having already gained a qualification, not of degree standard, in China some years previously. Maisie, through work as a volunteer had gained an interest in and knowledge of occupational therapy. Her qualified colleagues encouraged her, over time, to apply for the degree course. Maisie was eager to take up another challenge in life, specifically occupational therapy, and although lacking

confidence in her ability, applied and was eventually accepted onto the degree course. Fianna and Daithi had always had it in the back of their minds that they would return to education, Daithi to complete modules of an unfinished qualification that he had abandoned when he had gone off travelling around Europe, and Fianna more from the point of view as a step not yet taken, one that she had been not quite ready to take, (even though offered a place on a degree course), immediately after completing her Leaving Certificate when younger. However, both had very busy and in the main, happy working lives.

6.3.4.2 Re-engaging prompts

The credentialisation of foreign language teaching was a particular prompt to Daithi to apply for a degree course, as this had been his main source of livelihood for over a decade. Circumstances dictated that Fianna take voluntary redundancy from her public service job, she had the encouragement of her partner and previous colleagues from her trade union involvement in returning to education, particularly as she wanted to hone her skills and knowledge of the policy area. Shiela was the only one of the group who had left secondary school at the mid cycle. She was a stay at home mum to four children, one of whom had a particularly rare and debilitating physical disability. This had been a steep learning curve for Shiela, as she had to find information on her son's condition (prior to easy internet access) and fight battles with authorities to gain necessary supports. However, it was her practical experience in looking after her son and knowledge gleaned in the process, that convinced her that she could try out for nursing. She was accepted by Trinity, and enjoyed the course immensely but found it a

great struggle, never having studied biology and having left secondary school at the age of fifteen. Upon qualifying she secured a job as a nurse in a Dublin hospital.

6.3.4.3 Goal orientations and levels of achievement

Maisie, Ursula, Fianna and Shiela had all been orientated towards particular occupations when re-entering education. They were all successful in gaining employment post degree in their chosen fields, successful in their operation of these jobs and acceptance by their colleagues, thus enjoying the acquired status and economic rewards commensurate with those positions. Gareth had chosen his second degree, psychology, to complement the business contacts and knowledge he had from a well established career in engineering. His aim in doing so was to set up his own consultancy business and having more control over his own time. He completed an additional Masters course in psychology and has been successful in his original aim. Ned determined to continue to combine part-time work with pursuing a doctorate in physiotherapy, as there was a moratorium on recruitment in the Health Service at the time he graduated. He is reconciled to this at present and is combining part-time work in the private Health sector with his doctorate studies. Kevin and Daithi also engaged in additional qualifications, both feeling there was an inevitable need to go beyond degree level if there was any chance of getting a job. This has not necessarily been anticipated. Subsequently Kevin has been employed in a computer analyst position but is unhappy with his salary. Daithi has various part-time jobs but has felt the need to continue gaining qualifications in an effort to increase both his scope and chance of employment. Neither Daithi nor Harry are particularly content with the outcome of

having engaged in education as mature adults, as it has given neither individual the financial security that they were hoping for. Harry had not achieved the requisite points in his Leaving Certificate to study dentistry, and had instead completed a degree in primary school teaching. Although he secured a job in the profession, he could not shake the longing to do dentistry. He applied as a mature adult and secured a place in Trinity. He had unexpected and serious health problems in the first year of the course and found the course directors unhelpful, nevertheless, he managed to continue in his studies and secured very good grades. Upon qualifying Harry had to engage in additional training and between his years in college and subsequent years training, is in significant debt. Although he loves the work that he does and it is the achievement of a long held dream, he has mixed feelings about having gone down this path. Had he remained a teacher, he would be much better off financially and personally. He feels that his decision and his level of debt is preventing him from moving on in his personal life as he could not afford to socialise and could not afford a house or a family. In respect to the notion of social mobility, Harry's experience is somewhat unusual in that his education has facilitated him in gaining status associated with being a professional dentist, however he has not gained the associated financial recompense. This has had arrested development along his life-cycle in that he does not feel able to engage in behaviour and roles normatively associated with a man in his thirties. It could be argued, in this instance, that education has stalled social mobility.

6.3.4.4 Summary of Strategists

This cohort best fit in with policies that articulate the association between education and the labour market (for instance OECD, 2004; National Development Plan, 2007-2013), in the sense that they had a goal in terms of occupation within the labour market. Some of them found it extremely difficult in terms of their lack of subject knowledge that would be vital to their specific field. Some faced great challenges in combining study with paid work, a necessity given their family commitments. This group exhibited different types of personalities, some combining confidence with direction, others plagued by doubt. However, all were tenacious in keeping their goals fixed and striving to achieve them. These findings echo those of Hopper and Osbourn (1975, 113):

> Data suggests that the two personality characteristics which are most relevant to an adult's decision to return to formal education are the intensity of his achievement orientation in general and his economic and status orientations in particular.

Of particular note in the analysis of this group's data is that there was more discussion as to the value of a primary degree in achieving one's goal. In this instance Individuals could have been affected by anomogenic and/or blocking goal orientations. This would have been framed in terms of goals shifting with additional credentialisation being required that would not necessarily been anticipated and would have been taken as a sign of the current times. This is an important point of interest, given that

this group is an exemplar of "best fit" in terms of social policy aimed at providing education to facilitate people gain employment in the workforce.

6.4 Pathways

The previous section has identified commonalities in terms of orientation to third level education across various ages, social backgrounds and previous levels of education. This section focuses on the manner in which the participants applied for entry into their college courses. Acceptance to study at degree level, as a mature student, in a university in Ireland is mediated by achieving the requisite entry requirements in the Leaving Certificate or equivalent recognised examination, or by particular dispensation arrangements determined by quotas (for instance age, coming from a disadvantaged background, having a disability or a combination of all three) which are institutionally and nationally specified.

Fifteen respondents within this cohort had successfully passed the Leaving Certificate or equivalent. Four of that fifteen, also had university degrees. From the entire cohort, only Monamon was adamant that she eschew the mature entry route. Based on the experiences of others, Monamon viewed the process as humiliating and not one that she was prepared to endure:

> I wasn't going to go down the mature route ... I had heard so many stories, for example, a woman on our estate had applied. She had four kids and she went into the mature student thing and they said

> to her, "Oh I see you have four kids, and everything, how will you do your course? and they said, "They were most interested in people who had a vivid life, you know that sort of thing" ... then they said, "What is on the front of the Irish Times, you know, this morning and she said, "Well I got the four kids to school, I got on the bus, I came straight in, you know, I walked in here, and I haven't looked at the Irish Times. You know basically she ran out of the room crying and that was only one of several stories I heard. (Monamon, 299-314)

Instead Monamon sat the Leaving Certificate twice more in an attempt to get the requisite points for her preferred choice. Ray entered college as a mature student, however it was as part of a specific programme designed to professionalise nursing. All others entered through the dispensation scheme. Ursula and Gareth had established careers, in pharmacy and engineering respectively, built from their initial primary degrees. From this perspective their attendance at university to sit for another primary degree could be taken to represent a trajectory interrupted. Their previous occupations were instrumental in pivoting them towards what they now wanted in terms of occupation. Ursula had a successful career in pharmaceuticals but had not lost a long held desire to become a doctor. Gareth had an engineering and business background but wanted to acquire a psychology degree in order to capitalise on his former knowledge and establish his own consultancy business. Harry and Ned both felt that they had to "settle" somewhat with their primary degrees and sought alternative degrees very early on in their lives. Harry qualified as a teacher, having not gained the sufficient points for dentistry which had been his first choice. He worked in

teaching whilst waiting to be of an age to make mature application to dentistry. Ned had determined to become a physiotherapist but did not gain the requisite points in the Leaving Certificate, a sports scholarship facilitated him studying for a primary degree in the United States. He was able to build his degree to include subjects that would be useful in physiotherapy, with the intention of applying for a position on a physiotherapy degree course in Ireland as a mature student. The experience of Harry and Ned therefore represent trajectories delayed. Ray's situation was unique in the sense that the degree programme that he undertook was part of a programme to professionalise nursing to a further extent than already existed. It could be argued that Ray's case is not representative of a deviation between trajectory and life-cycle. Ray could have continued "as was", not availing of the chance to study. However, the degree course afforded him the opportunity to increase his credentials, thus gaining additional status reflected within occupational mobility and enhanced pay and conditions. The deviation therefore from the non-credentialised pathway which he was travelling, onto one where education afforded scope and progression, represents a trajectory enriched.

6.4.1 Pre -college courses

Whilst the mature route into college pays cognisance to particular life skills honed from life experience, many individuals engage in some form of pre-college courses. These courses usually help develop some generic study skills, include aspects of self development, and offer some type of academic study, in addition to providing insight into aspects of college life. Eleven of this cohort engaged in some form of these

courses. Although participation in these courses does not guarantee acceptance onto a degree course, they are nevertheless, generally well regarded by both administrators and academics within third level institutions and by students themselves. The experiences of two respondents, Maisie and Seansher, are offered to illuminate the importance attached to preparation for college courses.

Maisie through her volunteer work in a school for children with disabilities worked side by side with Occupational Therapists. Exposure to this work, created a singular but tentative interest in becoming one herself. This was strongly encouraged by others in both the domestic and work sphere:

> I was working in a unit, I was working with OT's[51] there, and I also had a friend who had a debilitating terminal illness, and she had need for an OT, and before this I hadn't heard of an OT, and she used to say to me, "Why don't you do it?" 'Cos I would adapt things for her, you know, I would sort out different things and she would say "Why don't you do it?" and I would say "I barely get to look at the paper, let alone study, and mm and then one of the OT's in the clinic kept on, you know, chipping away at me saying you should do it. (Maisie, 160-165)

[51] OT was the term used in the interview by Maisie as shorthand for Occupational Therapist.

Having the backing of her work colleagues and her family she made application to the mature programme. However, she did not succeed on her first attempt, feeling that, despite the support, she lacked confidence:

> I know in my heart that I would have struggled if I had gone in the first time, so I wasn't a bit surprised when I didn't get a place. It was nearly like I talked myself out of a place at the thing. I said, " I am not really ready yet" and they could see that 'cos I hadn't written an essay or done anything like that, whereas after the access course I had done my essays, and was in the swing of things, and it made a huge difference (Maisie: 177-181).

During the course of her first interview, one of the panel suggested completing a pre-college course before applying again. Maisie was now situated at a point where the interviewer (having system knowledge) had the power to share beneficial information and did so. As theorised by Hopper (1981), Maisie demonstrated the insatiability from which the need for change grows and found focus for this in an occupational goal orientation. What she lacked at this stage was confidence and the belief that these goals were achievable. Therefore, although she had a strong achievement orientation towards her goal, she did manifest a level of anxiety to the extent that her lack of confidence served as a blocking factor initially in pursuit of her goal. However, she was accepted and encouraged by her qualified co-workers, as they held her qualities, as a volunteer within the school, in high regard, even if she herself did not do so. For Maisie, the critical or fortuitous event occurred when her husband found a brochure

on 'back to college' preparation courses run by the National Council of Ireland. She spoke very highly of this course both in terms of its preparation for life as a student both academically and personally. Armed with both life experience in the field and with the return to learning course she reapplied for the degree course and was successful. What increased her status in lieu of education route and amount was her life experience, her educational capital in terms of the access course, and her peripheral group membership (in terms of acceptance and encouragement) of the Occupational Therapists in her work place.

Having been unemployed for approximately a decade prior to returning to education, Seansher did not benefit from the support of a group of colleagues, as did Maisie, nor did he have the support of his family. As a teenager, he had wanted to remain in school, complete his Leaving Certificate and apply for college. However, even though his mother tried to support him, it was extremely difficult as his home life was dysfunctional:

> It was a living tyranny to live in the house. There was a lot of negative vibes in the house, it wasn't the most conducive place to be ... I did go as far as my Leaving Cert but I failed my Leaving Cert and I took this very personal ... I had planned, I had ideas, actually I did think about going to third level. I did actually repeat my leaving, or I repeated fifth year, when I did my leaving, I stayed back, and it was mainly at my own instigation that I did that, although I spoke to my teachers about it, but

> it still wasn't, there was an awful lot of pressure at home and it still kept going on. (Seansher, 30-40)

Seansher emphasised the far reaching influence of toxic influences during the formative years of development:

> I had very low self-esteem. I didn't think I was capable of holding anything down. I was effectively on the dole for ten years until I made a decision to go back to education. (Seansher, 45-46)

At this stage in his life Seansher, appeared to lack confidence in his abilities, in his technical and/or diffuse skills and his ability to work, and those in his immediate social environment did not appear to value educational progression. In a sense, his life-cycle and his life-trajectory, these routes that he was travelling along were acceptable within his social milieu. Two questions arise then: 1) why did Seansher value education, and 2) what prompted him to seek change through education? The answer to the first question was Seansher's belief in self. Despite his lack of credentialised success, he had a strong belief in his own agency, his personal capital, particularly in his intellect:

> I knew I had a burning intelligence and I did thrive on learning stuff, learning more or something in a structured way. That was what always eluded me and it was a desire for that always. (Seansher, 85-87)

Seansher increased his informal knowledge base through his habits:

> In those wilderness years I would have written a lot of stuff and I wrote plays and poetry. I didn't get very far with them but it was a way of expressing myself, a way of channelling my feelings, like the thoughts and the like. (Seansher, 61-63)

The answer to the second question was the critical/fortuitous event which in this instance was the death of a much loved aunt. This caused Seansher to re-evaluate his life and seek change. His interests in writing, as a first step, led him to sign up for courses being run in his local area:

> It was an aunt of mine on me mother's side that died. An aunt I was very close to and it made me question all kinds of things. (Seansher, 87-88)

At this juncture, Seansher was availing of structural facilitation to change. Attendance on these courses increased his confidence in engaging in education and exposed him to further educational options, including that of completing a Btech course (a degree level, practically orientated course). Following a visit from an outreach representative from the Trinity Access Programme (TAP), to a local centre that he was attending, he decided to apply and was accepted onto the preparation for college course. At this stage he had a choice, either to complete the Btech course, or to participate in the TAP. This was a very difficult decision for Seansher. Completing the Btech course

would have been, in a sense, part of the continuum of the educational trajectory in which he was engaged. Moving onto the TAP- university pathway was a step along a less familiar path. Given his previous decade of unemployment, lack of confidence, lack of a social group or support, it was of interest to understand why he chose to deviate from the particular pathway upon which he was travelling, where he had acknowledged successes, group support and acceptance from periphery (fellow students) and core (lecturers and tutors) group members. The question was posed as to whether the status of the "Trinity name" had been a draw. Seansher answered in the negative:

> That was more alienating, more off-putting, that was more alienating, that wouldn't have pulled me in.... you know I had never walked through the gates before I started here. I didn't use those gates. I didn't feel I could use this place it wasn't for me. (Seansher, 147-151)

He said the decision was very difficult but ultimately he chose Trinity as he wanted to engage more in the academic process:

> What Btech offered me was an extension of what I was already doing which was the chance to work with vulnerable communities, but on the practical side of it, it did really interest me as well, but also on the opposite side of that was wanting more, mm, wanting to learn more, but I still really wasn't fully cognisant of what was

> involved in the academic, so that was the use of doing the TAP course. (Seansher, 137-141)

This in itself was a noteworthy factor. It suggests at this early juncture, education was having a transformative effect, in both a personal and a social sense, in that he was aware of his honed skills and acquired knowledge, and had gained enough confidence to be able to venture outside of his comfort zone and engage in a social milieu that he felt was far different to that with which he was familiar. He held the TAP course in very high regard both in terms of being a vehicle of preparation and of continual support as did some of the other graduates from TAP (Trish and Tara). This translated into loyalty and continued engagement with the programme during his entire time at Trinity, in terms of acting as an advocate, and a support of new students on the programme. Such action, not only serves to highlight the effect of group membership but also Hopper's (1981) theorising on goal orientation. In this instance, the goal aspiration was in engaging in academic study to degree level rather than a vocational course to degree level, the TAP course engendering a belief that this goal is possible. His referents are two groups, the one where he forms his achievement orientations (those coming through TAP) and those (graduates from Trinity College) with whom he compares himself. Unlike Maise, Seansher did not bring life experience in the sense of having worked or volunteered in a relevant area to his interests, in this instance it was a sense of social justice. However, it was the status of his accumulated educational capital, that facilitated his acceptance onto the TAP course, which in turn acted as a gateway into university.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In the opening pages of their book, Hopper's et al., (1975:10) pose the following question: "How is society possible in which social order is maintained primarily through internal volition and only secondarily through external coercion?" This should not be particularly surprising as individuals are born helpless and in order to survive, have to be socialised into some milieu with regard being given to the process, the person, the context and time. In studying adults engaged in education Hopper et al., (1975) were examining how the education system which systemically supported social selection and stratification could also be used as a tool of systemic correction and in doing so also study how mature adults were able to handle discontinuities in their socialisation experiences.

The typologies developed in this chapter go some way to supporting Hopper, and Hopper et al's., (1975, 1981) endeavours by reflecting on subjective and objective experiences. Across these typologies there is evidence to suggest that people played their role in their own social background, and sought change from a feeling of relative deprivation or from a sense of insatiability. The typologies developed here contribute to this field by reflecting on the experiences of the individuals, from different social milieus, their interaction with the education system, the expectation from themselves and their families in terms of their engagement in education, their occupation and status goals, the point of departure from their unique life trajectories, and their degree of insatiability. It is this point of insatiability and their establishment of goals that point their orientation towards education.

The data analysis suggests that orientation towards education does not reflect stratification in terms of social class background, commonalities in terms of age or gender, rather these typologies of orientation suggest that difference is nuanced and secondary to similarity. Common across all typologies is that individuals are engaged in a process of change, which is transformative in terms of being additive for the individual, rather than being transformative in terms of facilitating metamorphosis of the individual. The findings are somewhat in keeping with those of Mueller et al., (2013) in that there are similarities between their amalgamated identification of careerists with that of strategists in this typology, in that these cohorts formed the bulk of individuals engaging in education. However, a motivation to increase self confidence was not a factor in the orientations towards education for the strategists. Mueller et al's., typologies, drawing on the work of Slowey et al (2012) and Merrill et al., (2004) condensing typologies into three groups; careerists, degree orientated and educational aspirants is useful in providing a broad overview of mature participation in education along a European dimension. The development of the typologies in this thesis echo that of Mueller et al., (2013) in that they too highlight the importance of having both a goal and a desire to achieve that goal. However by reflecting on the Irish experience alone, this thesis has cast a lens on the nuances and complexities that contribute to orientation and which may be overlooked in the broader spectrum typology of Mueller et al., (2013).

This chapter then moved on to consider the decision making processes prompting the journey into education. Although policy facilitates mature studentship in terms of

alternative entry routes, deviations from particular life paths are not taken lightly by mature students, not least because of the commitment required to study. Critical incidents/fortuitous events have been noted as pivotal in the decision making process of individuals, these often being simple events such as a chance meeting. However, education has to have had some value in the psyche of the individual, and the notion of attitude formation was introduced paying cognisance to both the dominant discourses on lifelong education and the insatiability that accompanies the need for change in the individuals. Educational policies' facilitation of mature entry has been outlined in chapter two. Given that many of the students have availed of pre-college courses, the experiences of two students, (one with informal knowledge, occupational and familial support, and the other with status gained from increasing his educational amount but with no occupational knowledge or family support) were offered to illuminate the importance of this facility.

7 Chapter Seven-University Years

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified the orientations within this cohort towards education. It also explored the concepts of attitude formation and critical/fortuitous events that pivot individuals towards engaging in a degree course in Trinity College. This chapter will concentrate on the stories of respondents in relation to their time spent at university as mature students. Often, emails from the college authorities are addressed to the college community. Therefore, as a starting point, I regard any potential engagement within Trinity College as potential engagement within a community. One of the questions guiding this thesis sought to explore the experiences of the respondents within the academy in terms of their interactions with this community. In the course of the interviews, participants spoke about their time at university, their trials and tribulations with the subject matter, with academia, with other students and with juggling additional roles and responsibilities. In analysing the data, although common themes emerged, each story was unique and each person's narrative revealed different levels of engagement / non engagement, difficulty or ease, liking or disliking within the college community, even though for all, the college community was a shared constant. In order to make sense of this, I wanted to classify their experiences relative to the structure of the college community. In reading the data, a pattern emerged of different areas of preoccupation for the interviewees. To this end, I found it useful to take their comments and use them to deconstruct the

collective of college community and consider the different identities of the broad groups that are referenced within (appendix 16; college grid statements). This is an important step in exploring the full college experience, as a person may flourish in some settings and diminish in others. The theoretical viewpoints underpinning this analysis are described in chapter three.

A précis of group membership (Hopper, 1981; Putnam, 2000; Asch, 1955) suggests that it is based on: a) group acceptance, b) the levels of acceptance necessary within echelons (core /periphery) of the group proper and c) the standing of that group in relation to other groups. For instance, blue chip companies (Egerton, 2001, 2001b; Windolf, 1997, Livingstone 1999) have targeted those who have been to prestigious universities, in other words, formed part of an elite group of scholars. However, an alternative position noted is that even such attendance does not guarantee a comparable financial return if the constituent parts of the individual do not correspond to the image of a student from that institution (Hansen, 2001; Egerton & Parry, 2001; Woodley & Wilson, 2002; Staunton, 2008). Both these positions speak to the notion of status. The former speaks to the status added by the perceived prestige of the institution; the latter speaks to the perceived lack of status attached to the individual. Both positions speak to the level of group belonging that the person holds through association with the institution; the extent to which the person is accepted by the periphery and the core members, and the extent to which this translates into acceptance by other groups. I will explore group membership through an alternative lens, that is to view group membership and the status attached to group membership from the individual's subjective perspective, rather than from the core and periphery

bounded requirements, by reflecting on the need, willingness and availability of the individual to enter and participate in groups and to explore whether or not (from the individual's perspective) this is a regarded as an important factor in terms of group belonging.

7.2 College Community

The groups which have evolved in this community represent formal and informal structures, the Schools being part of the academic hierarchy and thus a formal group; administrative centres, additional services such as information technology (IT), the Library Services, Student Learning Centres support, in a sense, the raison d'être of a university, and could be seen as a supportive group in the function of a university. Student societies are informal collectives and are regarded as having an important contribution to make to the college journey of students. They would be referred to in publications produced by the college in order to attract applications, thus could be regarded as semiformal groups and are seen as a vital supportive element of the college journey. Friendships and friendship groups are also of value in negotiating the college journey. These, by their nature, have to evolve organically, influenced by common interests, time available, personality and so forth. They form an important informal support whilst in college. Group membership therefore, in analysing the data, has been organised along formal and semiformal lines, (figure7.11) which can be further subdivided: Formal (formal, supportive), Semiformal (semiformal, informal) constituting the college community.

7.2.1 Group grid

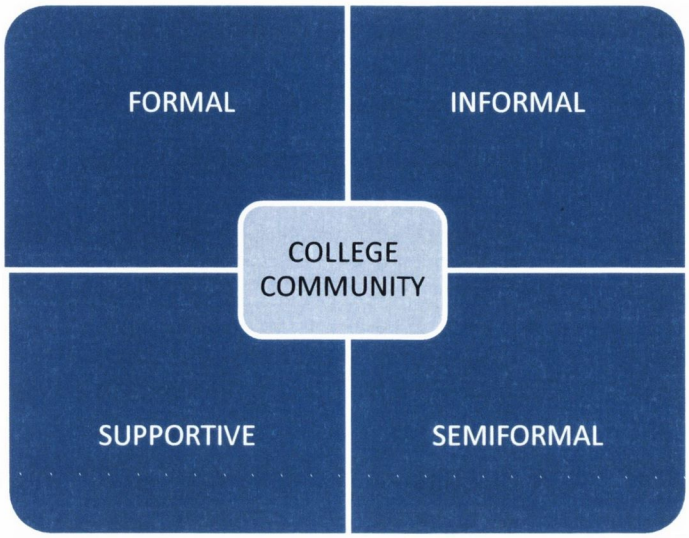


Figure 7-1: Constituent groups of the College Community

7.2.2 Formal Group

This group embodies the academic relationship between academic staff and students within the university. The student has to partake in lectures, tutorials, laboratory work if appropriate to the course design, complete assignments, pass exams and acquire a degree under the guidance of the academic staff. The academic staff have to prepare, most often design, deliver a course, set and mark exams that are in keeping with developing a student's knowledge regarding the subject matter. The rules and responsibilities of each party to this relationship are formalised in individual School handbooks.[52] It would appear to be a relatively straightforward assumption, that a student has been accepted into this group, by virtue of being on the college roll and participating as required of a group member of the academy.

[52] These School handbooks combine the bespoke course on offer within each School with the general rules and regulations of the University.

It could be argued that a distinction between core and periphery in this instance is defunct, as there are such clearly defined and transparent roles for group members, and deviation from such roles has prescribed and known outcomes. For instance, in the case of a student member of the group not completing course work, a failing grade will result, for staff deviations from prescribed roles there are outlined consequential returns.

Most of the cohort interviewed felt that overall the academic staff was accepting of mature students within the student body:

> It didn't matter who you were you were just a face in the crowd. (Maisie, 282)

However, some noted nuances in the behaviour of academic staff which suggested a degree of non acceptance or at best muted tolerance, of mature students:

> They were less holistic, maybe less open to the full human experience, maybe that's the way of putting it, which was what I wanted to pursue, that was the road I wanted to go down. I felt they were quite exclusive put it that way. (Seansher, 278-280)

> He kinda didn't talk to me, you know I didn't, I would go home and say, "That one thinks I am like the women, you know, the women

> down in the town, you know, all I am fit for is peeling spuds at the sink" but he kinda warmed to me. (Marymau, 940-942).

However, there was also evidence that the older student was viewed positively:

> The feedback I get is that mature med students are easy pesy, like because they know what they are about, and they have come back by choice. It's not because it is expected of them ... they are self motivated, they can help bring the group along a little bit. (Ursula, 277-280)

Common grievances centred on lack of help with the "inner knowledge" of how to produce essays to get the best grades, despite hours of preparation and research:

> I tell you, you see young students ... they know exactly what is needed in exams and they know exactly how to get the marks, whereas a mature student going in, I hadn't a clue ... they would study three or four questions for an exam and they wouldn't even go to lectures for the others, and they would come out with better results than I would. (Martha, 460-464)

There was an expectation among some of the participants that lecturers would give extra time to help students tackle something that was particularly difficult:

> I asked a few of them and they would say offhand like, you know, "Well that's it, you don't think, we don't have time to go through it, you know." (Martha, 493)

This could point to an understanding of education based perhaps on their historical experience of primary and secondary school teachers as imparting knowledge and they, as students, being receivers, whilst a feature of university education is an implicit expectation of independent study. Whilst this may be so, such an explanation ignores the elusive power play at work whereby mature students, (lacking the grounding and knowledge that is considered the remit of students transitioning from secondary schools) were at a disadvantage with the systems of knowledge within the university. This deficit could be viewed as translating into a lack of education capital, thus meaning that the mature student does not have the same measure of education capital as a traditional age student, resulting in the mature student's educational status being less than that of a traditional aged student, resonating with Bourdieu et al's (1977) perspective of original habitus clashing with college habitus. However, Hopper (1981) notes that one of the functions of education is career training. Regardless therefore of whether mature students had instrumental orientations in mind, they should, through this third level education, be equipped with the same skills as their younger counterparts. In other words, their toolbox of abilities should be replenished with these particular system knowledge skills. The rules and regulations guiding the formal relationship within the academic-student group were not, in the experiences discussed by this group, malleable enough to address these particular

needs. Any extra help offered within this relationship was driven by the goodwill of particular lecturers in specific cases.

The data also suggested that the expectations of some academics was not confined to mature students lacking the technical skills (such as essay writing) that overall were the remit of traditional students, but there was also expectation regarding social backgrounds. Tara was a mature student, who was asked about her social class background during a sociology lecture. Having identified herself as working class she was told:

> How interested he was that there were working class people coming in through Trinity College. (Tara, 137)

Mature students would be aware that their life experience would have played some measure, no matter how small, in assisting their entry into university. Whilst all participants appear to have acknowledged a hierarchy of knowledge with academics being at the top imparting information and knowledge, there were expressions of puzzlement as to why these life experiences so valued in getting them into college were not valued by academics in informing the subject matter:

> One lecturer on crime said that people from disadvantaged areas, and with gangland crime at the time were, he said, they were living in fear. I said, "no they aren't", he said, "they are", I said, "my mother in law lives one of the biggest gangland

> areas in Dublin and we don't have to call over anymore at night, cause there are police sitting outside the door 24/7", so that's the truth of it. These people who are teaching about these areas, don't know anything about them, which I found very interesting. (Tara, 163-168)

In this example there is a chasm between the knowledge values of the core (the academic) and the periphery (the mature student) whereby the knowledge of the core (even if theoretical) is valued over the knowledge of the periphery (as experienced) and the knowledge of the periphery has been discounted by virtue of its origin. From this viewpoint, education has only been transformatory in terms of the knowledge and knowledge effects on the student and not on the repository and practises of that academic or of the institution.

Overall based on the experiences of this sample, in terms of group membership, mature students were accepted by the academics (lecturers, teaching assistants and tutors) who formed the core of the formal group. This acceptance was predicated on mature students being eager to learn and active in meeting course requirements. Visible sign of difference (age) did not appear to cause problems for academics, nor social background of mature students save for the comments recounted earlier in this chapter.

However, a lack of certain academic skills caused some problems which academics most times outsourced to the supportive group structures facilitated within the college

community, although on occasion a lecturer might provide additional help. The manner and mode of disseminating knowledge (the power of the core group) did not change as a result of the changing constituency of the periphery (student body) group. The value system embedded in the academy was such that the knowledge quotient of the core group (academics) was at all times superior to that of the periphery group (students), with respect to this sample.

7.2.3 Supportive Group

This group is an umbrella group for all the ancillary services provided by Trinity College to complement and support the academic endeavours of students and to support their general well being and welfare. They comprise of services such as the pastoral service, health service, student learning services, counselling services, career guidance services and TAP.

7.2.3.1 Trinity Access Programme (TAP)

TAP is somewhat unique in this group in that its raison d'être is prior to college attendance. However, it is included in this group as its mission is to widen access and participation in third level from under- represented groups in the community. It runs pre-college foundation courses for young adults and mature students. Five of this sample of mature adults had done the TAP course prior to getting a place in Trinity. For three of those people it remained an important source of support during their time in their respective support programmes. Of the other two mature students, one

appreciated what she had learned on the course, but didn't refer to it in terms of her time doing her degree, and the other individual felt that the focus was on sorting out personal issues and so did not find it suited for her needs:

> There were a lot of people with a lot of personal issues ... the majority of them are women, but there was people with problems in their personal life, or people I could see were emotionally damaged growing up and were not coping very well with the situation in TAP, with having to produce work, appear every day, sit in a seat, and it would spill out into the classroom issues, private issues, personal issues...During the time I was there I realised, I know I came from a background that wasn't great either, but my God I am a hell of a lot better off than I thought I was ... and I remember thinking around Christmas that I could have gone straight into the University and coped fine because I was able to cope with all of that drama and still get my work done. (Annie, 194-205)

However, for the others it remained an important source of support throughout their time on their degree courses in Trinity:

> The supports that we had from TAP were also important in giving us a sense of, you know, it remained a source of support to its past students. The actual feeling of being supported of being like, we think this is worthwhile, if you have someone saying it to you this is

> worthwhile and we are behind you and you are our ambassadors in the college, while mm I think a lot of other mature students didn't have that and it may have been harder and it may have contributed to them going and they may have dropped out ... We did make good relationships, the relationships with the younger people, we did have a lot of good relationships with the younger students, but I think it's, they didn't mm a number of the regular students, the 20 year olds, would have mm, I think wouldn't have been have supportive or as understanding of mature students. I think it also depends on, from what I heard of other people who have gone back, other than BESS and Social Science, to other faculties in the department mm, and I heard that they would have, some of those faculties wouldn't have been, you know, as understanding of others. (Seansher, 772-782).

Equally, those past students mentored those who were prospective students coming through TAP. In one sense, this is an example of the human need to affiliate, as discussed in chapter three where individuals gain a particular social identity through being a member of this group, thus gaining support and deriving comfort and confidence from this group membership (Turner et al., 1987; Tajfel, 2010). The group identity thus is rendered dynamic, with interaction between the core and periphery in that the formal knowledge of the course providers expands to include and benefit from the experiences of the past students. Past students, in this sense also become educators, and having a foot in both camps, are able to impart aspects of the hidden

knowledge that is useful in negotiating group membership of the student body. In Hopperian terms (1981) there is in this instance both a utilitarian and community value to this instance of group membership, in that individuals' needs have been identified and serviced and also that they value their group bond and its usefulness in their endeavours. However, being a member of this group can in another sense inhibit membership of the student body in terms of informal needs being met by membership of this one group. An example of this can be seen in Seansher's comment above, a strong identification with the TAP group mitigated against membership of the student body general. His social needs were met by the TAP group and he forged his identity as a working class male belonging to a working class support group within or parallel to the student body. In doing so he displayed status rigidity to the extent that he sought to associate social class membership with academic prowess, and as such eschewed identification primarily as a Trinity student. Whilst many other students spoke fondly and favourably of their association with TAP, and would have supported and been supported by TAP whilst pursuing their degrees, they would not have exhibited the same rigidity towards membership of the TAP fraternity.

7.2.3.2 Student Services

The student services most identified by this cohort were the Learning Support Centre, the Counselling Service, the Pastoral Tutors and the Careers Service. Tash and Kate would have engaged with all services in their journey through their undergraduate degrees, and overall found them invaluable in assisting them complete their degree programmes. However, there was some comment from Tash as to the Counselling

Service not being used to the range of problems that a mature student might present with:

> Now, I never went to the counselling, well I went to the bereavement counselling once and over family issues and didn't really like that 'cos I felt it was geared towards younger students. (Tash, 567-569)

The pastoral tutor is a member of the academic staff who acts as a conduit between the student and his/her School and other services should the student have particular difficulties, and choose to avail of this service. Each undergraduate is assigned a pastoral tutor, and it is up to the undergraduate as to what extent, if any, they engage with the pastoral tutor. With the exception of Marymau and Monamon, all who availed of the services of the pastoral tutors spoke highly of the service.

> I rang her a few times and she said a sentence to me on the phone that I got basically a bit huffed up over it. She said I caused them enough trouble. (Marymau, 1154-1155).

> I found him terrible ... he was terrible in fact a girl as I went into him a girl came out crying and I found he was like sort of a [sic] he had no connection. (Monamon, 662-664)

However, in the main, most who availed of this service found it excellent and on occasion vital in keeping them on books:

I mean the idea of a tutor I think is fantastic, the idea of it, it's like having a wife. (Kate, 497)

My personal tutor ... he was brilliant he was very, very good. He was very understanding, but you know that's life isn't it? People have to struggle with these situations. (Linda, 752-807)

When discussing the career service most were of the opinion that this was not geared up to be appropriate for mature students. There was a belief expressed that this was a service that catered for traditional aged students embarking on work careers, and in the dominant areas of business and finance, and could not fully exploit the array of potential in excess of education that mature students brought to the table:

I can't say that I found the career advice any good. Yes, they came in and they gave us a talk and towards the end I remember going down to them and they gave me very, very little that was relevant to my subject area. That's being honest and that's being honest so that for me was a big problem. (Andrew, 667-671)

I found them useless I availed of them in fourth year and to tell you the truth I was disgusted with them, I found them useless ... They have a nice little job over there, all of them. They tap away at their computers, they have all their files up there, but there is a gap and vagueness, they are not really in your case or on your side, they are

just doing their job, they are not really that interested. (Annie, 363-376)

The career service has, in a sense, a foot in two worlds, the world of academia and that of the marketplace. It has an awareness of the needs of the market place and indeed facilitates companies in sourcing graduates by means of milk rounds[53] and so forth. In this position of facilitation it acts as a conduit for the social realities of the work place. From the perspective of many of the respondents these realities are grounded in an expectation of a traditional view of a graduate. Therefore although the mature graduate might have the status of Trinity graduate and thus be desirable from this perspective, their age might register as a subtractive element to the notion of a Trinity graduate. In this instance age for many might have been translated as not only chronological numbers but the additive life experiences. This presents a conundrum for policy implementation. Policy has facilitated the education of mature individuals in part to up-skill the population for the knowledge economy. Yet the acceptance of a more diverse workforce may not have trickled down sufficiently into the marketplace to adequately reflect such diversity. It also raises the question as to and whether the additional values amassed through lived experience can be factored into a broader understanding of educational value and are recognised as contributions to the education of the mature student. Many of the respondents do not feel that this is the case and see the value of education being a university degree plus youth rather than a university degree plus life experience. The task of the career service could be

[53] Milk round is the term given to describe the mass recruitment of a number of graduates to engage in a period of training or induction as part of potential employment with a firm.

considered somewhat onerous, in having to change the cultural expectation of the workforce in anticipating a university graduate as being other than a young man or woman.

These services form the supportive group of the college community. Participation in any of these services is not obligatory. Yet for many of the students, these services mediate their successful journeys through college. The core of these groups are the agents who are providing the services on behalf of the college. The attending students are periphery members who can move in and out of the groups as required. In this sense the periphery members have a recognised power, that power being choice. Hopper's (1981) explanation of impeding factors is useful here. Aspects of the mature students' personal or academic lives is impeding progress and serving as blocking and/or comparative factors so causing disequilibrium. Engaging in supportive services affords the possibility of dealing with these factors and thus reducing disequilibrium.

7.2.3.3 Semi-formal Group

These comprise of the social and voluntary groups who operate under the umbrella of the college community. As such they are subject to rules of conduct, and are open to current (and sometimes past) students at Trinity. As interests evolve, new groups are formed, subject to adherence to the above mentioned rules. Groups have their own committees which come under the auspices of a central societies committee. In the course of the interviews when participants were asked whether they joined any societies many replied in the affirmative. However, when asked whether they actively

engaged in these societies, most laughed and admitted that they did not. Reasons cited included family commitments.

> Most definitely your life is not your own ... it's not your own when you have children, it's not your own when you study, and it's very hard to get time for yourself and there's no socialising much, but I think that's what you sign up for. (Josey, 142-147)

> I joined the history society, the Historical Society, but never went to anything because what I was trying to juggle was home life and college life and I basically treated it like a job and therefore I was going to be there for a certain amount of time and there was a certain amount of stuff that I had to do. (Annie, 307-312)

Given the emphasis placed on embracing all forms of college life in brochures and ancillary literature, the lack of commitment of mature students to this aspect of student life suggests a prioritising of additional facets of their own personal lives. This suggests, from the perspective of mature students, a placing of a hierarchy of status on lifestyle choices. Either through choice or external responsibilities, non-engagement suggests a non -shedding of aspects of self, and by consequence a non- valuing of the status attached to the particular groups. From this perspective, status legitimisation is redundant, as it is not valued by the mature student as an element of the educational hierarchy.

7.2.3.4 Informal Group

This refers to the friendship groups that build up between individuals. Friendships are an invaluable part of a support system for an individual. Of interest is how these are made within the college community, to what extent they went beyond the college walls and whether these were amalgamated with non college friends. Mature students in general reported having little time to socialise but valued the informal friendships that arose in college. Difference in age did not tend to result in feelings of alienation or impede the making of friendships:

> You would kinda feel it in first year because most of them are very, very young, but generally they matured, they matured tremendously between second and third year and by fourth year the guys and the girls were completely different people to talk to and I felt I had more in common with them. (Fianna, 986-970)

> I went in with the intention of treating it like a nine to five job and didn't expect to have a great time from a social point of view, because I would be much older than them and was pleasantly surprised that I had a better experience as a student going in at twenty eight doing medicine, than I had at seventeen doing chemistry, and I have made friends from there that are close friends still. (Ursula, 166-169)

> I was just one of the girls and the only time they would have acknowledged that I was older was when they would chat to me about boyfriend troubles. (Maisie, 232-233)

For many mature students their initial friendships were formed with other mature students by virtue of the physical recognition of older students in the lecture halls. In the early days of their academic careers people might sit beside those who looked like them, in other words, not a traditional young student. However, some were keen to avoid being labelled mature and avoided such habits:

> I didn't mix with mature students, I mixed with my classmates who were 18 19-year-olds and I was invited to 21st parties and all of that, they took me very much particularly because **** my son was in the crèche in Trinity so he was very much, they all knew him, and they were all very much part of that and he was accepted. I was very much accepted by my younger peers not as a vintage mature student. (Gareth, 32-35)

Others cited their friendships in associations with other groupings based on a common criteria, or comfort:

> Now my main place for socialising in Trinity was the cloakroom, did you know the ladies down there ****** and ****** that's the place I went to and chatted they became my friends. All the mature

> students who called into them or young students who called in, well there were a few going. (Monamon, 387-390)

> I smoked so I went out to smokers' corner and you meet everyone in smokers' corner and I got on with everyone in smoker's corner. (Kate, 371-372)

These friendships were played out most often in coffee breaks, with respondents citing family responsibilities as reasons for not getting together outside of lectures. A second area of interest with respect to friendships was whether the respondents mixed their "in college" friends with their "outside college friends" this did not seem to happen to any great extent:

> The friends I made inside college would have met other friends of mine ... but not well, you don't intermingle various groups anyway ... you know you do different things with different groups of friends. (Greta, 351-357)

However, this fact is not unusual. Adults through their life journeys engage in different group settings, (home life, occupation, leisure pursuits and so forth) and it is not assumed to be the case that these have to overlap. The separation of friends from the college and private spheres could have been similar. There was no need for social distance to be established between these spheres expressed in the stories of the participants. In discussing the support of family and friends outside of ~~the~~ college

community, most said that their families were supportive, although some qualified this by saying that this enthusiasm often did not translate into practical support. Some narratives noted that friends outside of college were uninterested in conversations regarding college experiences and others spoke of having to park friendships for the college years whilst prioritising study. The identity of self is wrapped up in social behaviour which is played out in the roles people adopt or have thrust upon them. Within the private sphere of the individual, friends and family either accommodated the changes in the identity of the mature student fully, partially or rejected such change. In the sphere of college, the mature student is the gatekeeper as to how much of an overlap there was between both worlds.

7.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter analysed the data regarding the experiences of this cohort whilst at Trinity College, through the lens of group membership. In doing so it sought to extend the information base regarding group behaviour by considering group membership from the perspective of individual engagement and the extent of freedom of choice the individual has in engaging in groups, and the extent to which this choice is exercised. In doing so, the college community was divided into four groups (formal, supportive, semiformal, and informal) with each group being discussed in terms of the roles, benefits, and degree of freedom the individual had in being a member of said group. The next chapter presents the final stage of analysis by exploring the post college experiences of this cohort.

8 Chapter Eight- Postgraduate Years

> On the one hand, education is meant to provide people with the opportunity to develop themselves to the fullest and prepare them for real life as a full-fledged member of society. On the other hand, education is to produce potential employees and prepare people for the world of work. (Glebbeek & Waslander, 1998:226).

8.1 Introduction

This quote is an adept summation of some of the tensions existing with respect to education. Within the Irish domain, the political discourse, surrounding the widening net of participation in Higher Education, pays some cognisance to social justice however, (chapter two, section 2.3,2.4) it is most firmly nestled in a dogma of economic justification.

> Higher education is the key to economic recovery in the short term and to longer-term prosperity ... The implications are clear: the educational level of the Irish population has to be raised. We need more graduates at every level. People who are already employed need to raise their level of qualification and broaden their educational base. Unemployed people need new educational opportunities that are attuned to the demands of the new economy. (National Strategy, Hunt report, 2010:30)

This chapter will concentrate on exploring the return to the participants' investment in Higher Education. In considering the post graduate benefits or returns of a Trinity degree, it must be noted first of all, that all participants in this research have negotiated the college journey and acquired degrees. Viewed therefore through the narrow lens of academic achievement, the national and institutional policies which enabled or facilitated their educational journeys could therefore, be deemed successful. To a limited extent, it will interpret the State's investment in education as being a vehicle to employment and servicing the labour market, and investigate how and indeed whether this is evidenced in the (economic returns) post university experiences. The non financial gains of pursuing a university degree include personal growth, exploring life in a different manner and diffusing knowledge within the social milieu. These will be explored within this chapter through the lens of economic, personal and social returns.

8.2 Economic Returns

As a first step in reviewing the economic returns of this cohort I revisited the initial aims of the participants to see whether those with instrumental orientations were able to achieve them. In reviewing the experiences of this sample, three individuals from this cohort had not looked for work upon finishing their degrees. They were retired people, two of whom continued their studies upon completion of primary degree. Of the remainder, of the cohort, all who had sought employment had been employed (either full time, part-time or self employed) with the exception of four women, Linda,

Annie, Marymau and Rita would like to have been employed but had not been successful in gaining anything other than voluntary work.

The responses of this cohort suggest that the anticipatory policy outcomes: "Higher education system... resulting in the creation of high-quality, well-paid employment, economic growth, and a higher standard of living" (National Strategy, Hunt Report, 2010:30) may not in effect be the experienced outcomes. Those who engage in vocational graduate education can, subject to recruitment policies, shift into another State funded system, such as the Health Service and engage on a hierarchical ladder of pay and promotion and prospects. As such they are exemplars of successful policy intention-outcome match. Those who engage in a non vocational graduate education and are employed may:

a) Owe that employment to network knowledge more so than the subject matter of their degree.
b) Owe that employment to their previous non-college experiences rather than their acquired college knowledge.
c) May be earning less than if they had remained in a particular hierarchical career but perceive they have a more powerful role in the organisation.

The usefulness of networks both within and outside of the college community has been highlighted by some of the participants who had gained employment:

> They couldn't get a job. Realistically I got it because I knew people out there, realistically I would never have gotten that job, I heard about the job, so I was in the right place at the right time to apply for it. Someone was going on maternity leave but once you're in you're, you know, that kind of way. (Tara, 774-776).

> Just through connections, you know, through people I know and people who know people I know. They would advise me of, I did apply through a couple of government websites and mmm ah and the actual job I ended up getting, it wasn't advertised as such. I applied initially for relief, but it was a friend of a friend who worked there, so when she told me about the place, so I'd go on the relief panel, and then got a full time position. (Seansher, 618-622)

Equally, being outside of networks was also noted:

> If you want to try help teach adults anything you have to get into that system...and from what I can make out at the moment there is just no way into it. (Annie, 627-628)

> I just get the crumbs from the table of the Foundation and usurpers are doing the serious work and they are being properly paid for it and any work I do I get paid a pittance. I have a doctorate, I am specialised in the area...they have rich and powerful backers, I

> don't...you can't burn your bridges, you have no choice really and that's the feedback I got from several people, because there is so little work out there that you can't afford to fall out with people. (Anthony, 838-860)

Non-college experience, in terms of work roles, would on occasion have been seen as more important in securing post college work, than the substance of the degree course. In this case, employment has resulted in a change of situs, for example, as was the case with Tash, who had been doing administrative work prior to attending college and was now back doing so again:

> I needed to be in Dublin still and the job I have came up and I went for it and I thought, while, I thought, here I am back in admin., where I started thirty years ago and I did, I sort of resented being in administration for a while and I missed my research, and, but at the same time- practicality. (Tash, 753-756)

Tash's bachelor and doctorate degrees were in geography, she was passionate about the subject but was resigned to there being no lecturing opportunities available at the present time. As such it was her previous skills in office administration, in addition to her network within the college that was useful in getting her that particular job rather than her undergraduate and doctorate knowledge. The change in situs brought with it a change in status, in that administrative work within the University would be more

valued that administrative work in one of the firms that she had worked in previously, as, according to Tash, her family thought that:

> I could be a cleaner in Trinity and it would be, oh, you are working in Trinity it's great. (Tash, 958)

Reflections on pay and recompense were varied. Some felt that they were earning less than if they had remained in a previous career but perceive that they have a more valued role now:

> I kind of, I will always think in terms of the work because I spent so much time in a job that I hated you know in the [established company] I was well paid and my money would have far exceeded that now if I had stayed, you know, with no promotion ... but I'd be bored, I'd hate it, and I love my job and I'd have no challenge. (Fianna, 376-385)

> I suppose [pharmaceutical company] are one of the biggest companies in the world, huge opportunities in the world from a salary point of view and all that...but at the end of the day I wouldn't have been able to be my own boss (Ursula, 613-618).

However, there was also evidence that in some cases, participants considered themselves worse off financially than if they had stayed in their previous careers, without any compensatory prestige or benefit:

> It's very hard and being self –employed when you talk about security you know teaching you just turn up...do your job and go home...I see my friends now, like I am trying to start a pension at the moment and I don't have enough money to start a pension so if I stop working at sixty I get nothing, whereas in teaching you will ... tomorrow I won't get paid but my costs will remain the same, like insurance is E600 a month before you lift a drill. It's very expensive...I'm 35 and I can't even own a house and I'm thinking, like, God you need to put down roots somewhere... there's one thing, as a mature student a lot of others pass you out. (Harry: 992-1022)

Some participants (Maisie, Ursula, Ray and Shiela) had been employed in the health sector, having degrees that were vocational in nature, this placed them on a hierarchical pay scale commensurate with their qualifications and afforded a degree of job security.

Of those who were not working, three had chosen to engage in third level education as part of their retirement one of whom had hoped to get some form of work (either part-time or voluntary) in her area of interest but had not succeeded in doing so. Three of those who were unemployed had worked in some capacity in the voluntary sector, although this at times evoked resentment:

> I was doing voluntary work with the VEC ... the place in Blanchardstown asked me if I would come in. There was a group of people who wanted to do English and creative writing. Some of them had learning disabilities, mental problems, maybe had depression, had been in and out of psychiatric treatments and stuff like that, and these were all mature adults and could I help the woman that was running the course, could I help her out and I said yeah no problem ... I also asked them one day when I was in the office, when I went in to the office, where the staff were working. I said, "how do you get jobs teaching adults"? and they laughed at me, there are no jobs. (Annie, 531-580)

I had asked Annie for her thoughts on the rhetoric surrounding policies designed to get adults into Higher Education:

> It's a load of bull. There is a big, big abyss and it is not really properly, properly been scrutinised. The people at the bottom were the most vulnerable with the most problems, cannot really speak for themselves, so therefore they are just being doled out what the people at the top think is appropriate for them, who don't even really have an understanding of how these people live from day to day. (Annie, 598-635)

Annie's comment overall reflected a level of anger with what could be framed as manipulation of the education and political system. Any systemic correction (Hopper 1981) that was being performed was, in a sense, an exercise in class power and control, with, from Annie's perspective, middle class values being thrust upon working class people (Marshall, 2002; Jones 2012). She feels that rather than learn from 'people like her' and allow them to take the mantle in educating their peers, they continue to impose the same dogma on new recruits:

> [I'm]very angry very angry at the whole thing. I also feel what is forgotten, the link, the link that is missed in all of this is that there are people going through the system in College and they would have come maybe from the lower class or the working class or people with nothing, and it's God aren't they great, aren't they wonderful. They are still very few and far between because the majority of them wouldn't go because they would feel threatened, because as far as they are concerned that is not their class ... the likes of me, and there are probably others with this education, we're very lucky to have that and very grateful to have it. We want to use it for something else or somebody else. We do not want to have self gain out of it, I don't think a lot of us do and also I feel that there is a niche there for the likes of people like me, that it should be used and we are not. (Annie, 651-679)

Annie was quite angry about the stranglehold people at the top had on both the epistemology and ontology of education. Having decided to pursue a career in adult education herself, she viewed her lack of success in that job market, together with the incredulity that she met in expecting to have a paid job in that job market, as further evidence of the lack of political will in addressing cultural and social imbalances.

In exploring the economic returns, this thesis lacks clarity as to the amounts earned by those individuals who were employed, due to reticence of some of the participants in discussing money. While some people were happy to name salaries for pre university employment, nearly all were reluctant to do so for post-employment. Despite rephrasing this question in numerous ways (for instance, asking about salary brackets rather than actual amount) answers were invariably deflected:

First example: Seansher

I (interviewer): do you mind me asking how much is that, you know I am just trying to get an idea of the salary profile

S: ok yeah

I: or I could give you bands you know 10-20 thousand or under 10 thousand or

S: oh no it works out as mmm

I: I just wrote down bands in case people were more comfortable talking about bands it's very personal I know

S: oh yeah but along with other stuff there has been cuts in recent years

I: oh I know but say on a yearly basis would you have earned between say 11 and 20 thousand or between 21 and 30 thousand or

S no no I am as it stands now see my basic I would have a basic but there is also an allowance for doing work at unsocial hours there's

I: extras

S: extra for those hours I work a combination of days and nights. I have an eight week roster and I work four week days and four week nights and it actually works very well. It's not constant cutting between the two, you kind of get four week blocks and work every second weekend and mm and like I would have premiums for working Sundays, they would add in to my overall

I: overall but your basic rate

S: the basic rate mm let me think mm I don't know it depends I am so used to seeing mmm

Seansher (629-647).

2nd example: Ursula.

I: and do you remember that first job as an intern what you are earning even if you want to say in a bracket of say twenty to thirty, thirty to oh...

U: Oh it is very embarrassing I can't remember, ah no it was more than that well in the past interns probably work as a general group of doctors, the most hours, they work phenomenal hours and up until ten or fifteen years ago they were not being paid for the overtime, but a few years before we started the law had changed, so you had to be paid for the hours that you worked. So if I stayed in surgery and was working the six

months I might have worked seventy eighty or ninety hour weeks, but I was paid for seventy or whatever. I was paid my overtime so we would have worked hard and earned a good bit of money, but because of the ridiculous hours we worked not because our salary was high, but because of the crazy hours we worked, and then as we go up the level in terms of experience, knowledge and qualifications, you go from intern to SHO to registrar, senior registrar, specialist registrar or consultant and there is a salary bracket for each of those as you go up more, your salary goes up and up but it involves us experiencing more work, more exams ... but bear in mind that a lot would start earning with a huge debt of fees to pay, particularly the Americans, they have about two hundred grand of debt to pay before they start working. (Ursula, 383-403)

Overall, the success of policy strategies is mixed when viewing the economic returns to the individual. However, this is mediated not only by the Irish economic recession[54] which has resulted in a diminished private job market as well as an embargo on State recruitment, but also by the introduction of artefacts into an already established system, in the sense that credentialisation could be considered a "manufactured item" of something that already exists (for example Daithi's language skills) in a natural state. That is not to say that a graduate education adds nothing to the repertoire of the individual, rather that the vigorous political focus and imperative on graduate education is further diminishing the power of informal knowledge. Nevertheless, from the participants' perspectives, a higher education offered advantages other than

[54] Irish economic recession began in 2007 following the onset of the global financial crisis, developing into a deep recession by 2008. (Honohan, P)

economic, which were highly valued and which are addressed in the following sections.

8.3 Personal Returns

Participants felt that they were making an investment in the self in coming into Higher Education. The cost of this investment came in time spent studying, in some cases sacrifice (for instance friends or income), and lack of erstwhile availability to others. All interviewees felt that they had gained something in terms of self from becoming graduates. For some there was a great sense of personal achievement, of mastery in their chosen subjects. Many had a more nuanced enjoyment of previous hobbies and interests:

> On the islands there is a very nice museum and there are a few places out there, real old forts and things that have history attached to them, and I would like to write a piece about a few of those and leave it in the museum...keeping the history alive and making people aware of the importance of them and making them proud of what they have. (Martha, 682-685)

Others comment on a new depth to their reading habits:

> I read an awful lot more stuff, like when I started in College I ordered the *Economist*. I used to buy the *Economist* regularly and now I would read the *Financial Times* and I would read the business pages and I would follow the economic trends because I am much, more comfortable with it. I used to think there was a big mystery to it. Maybe If I read it before I went to College I would have had an understanding of it. I don't know, but I used to always think "Oh I don't know anything about that" so I kind of think I bring an informed presence to it now. (Fianna, 1438-1443)

> I mean you asked me before about interests. Well from my dissertation I was, I witnessed the coup on TV and I wrote this dissertation on it ... so when I see a book I read it, it's about the challenges and that. So I suppose between my degree and my year abroad, my year abroad has opened up a whole new life to me, that, I have friends that I never had before. You know I was living in a village as a, you know, they call them a gillie, a runner in who came for my holidays, whereas now I go down to the village and I get invited to all the local communions and weddings and funerals and whatever, so that's nice. (Kate, 719-725)

Marymau commented on how her appreciation of science, which had been a passion of hers since childhood, was now more informed and enjoyable thanks to her

education. Marymau was one of the older participants, and for her having a degree afforded her an escape from the perceived norms of a woman of her age:

> One lady in the town told me it would suit me better to stay at home and say me beads around the fire. (Marymau, 1502-1503)

Many found the experience validating a sense of self, happy to have proved to naysayers that they were capable of getting through the process at Trinity, and/or by evidencing that they were as entitled to a Trinity College education as anyone else. There were also feelings expressed of having 'filled in the blanks' and of adding to one's arsenal of experiences and preparation for life. Others sought to keep their brains active. This was particularly true in the case of the older participants:

> Well I felt I didn't want to be sitting at home. I wanted mental stimulation and a friend of mine, a colleague of mine, retired a few months earlier than me and we both decided that we would go and do something. It wasn't for us to be sitting at home and just doing casual stuff. (Mildred, 152-154)

> I would have friends who haven't gone to college and who have always been at home and they tell me they are frustrated, and they have dedicated their lives totally to their children, and then to their grandchildren, and whereas I have dedicated my life to my children and will to my grandchildren, but I just feel that I have something of

mine that belongs to me. It might be selfish I don't know. (Kate, 742-746)

Fifteen of this cohort continued their education and gained extra qualifications at diploma, masters and PhD levels. Of these fifteen, only three would have expected (at the time they commenced their undergraduate degrees) to have continued engaging in education beyond their particular undergraduate degree. These three people (Kate, Ray and Ursula) were hoping at the outset to engage in a particular career path, (Kate in foreign language teaching, Ray in the professionalization of nursing, and Ursula in medicine) a consequence of which required additional qualifications. In that sense the returns of their education could not correctly be classed as personal, but rather a blend of personal and economic. For the other twelve, the need or desire to continue engaging in education came about as a result of knowledge garnered during their time as undergraduates or as a result of lack of employment opportunities in the marketplace. In this sense the return of education, (in being suitably qualified to continue on to additional education) came about as a result of personal choice (even if there is an element of forced decisions from a social and economic perspective) and therefore is considered a personal return.

Engagement with higher education as an adult usually evidences a level of dissatisfaction with a present lived experience (Hopper, 1981). This need not be toxic but sufficient to encourage the individual to engage themselves in a different sphere. The responses garnered indicate a level of personal satisfaction with completing a degree, which existed in itself whether or not accompanied by financial recompense in

the labour market. Satisfaction is measured in terms of achieving change, rather than of value in situating themselves further up the hierarchical ladder or by increasing their human capital. It could be argued, from these perspectives, that education has been transformative for these individuals in supplying an additive factor to their lived experiences. In this sense the theories associating education with social mobility (Hopper, 1981; Bourdieu et al., 1977) and those associating education with human capital (Becker in Kern 2009) are somewhat less relevant. Rather the "prize" of a degree qualification has been in facilitating them to have a more discerning appreciation of hobbies, retain mental agility, and feel truer to the self.

8.4 Social Returns

The social returns of having acquired a degree were spoken about at length and with passion. Many felt that the true value of having a university education was in how they could disseminate the knowledge they had garnered to the benefit of their own families, organisations to which they were committed, and to the wider community.

Following on from her degree course, Tara was employed as a teacher in a community setting. She remained a committed community activist and felt that having a degree added greatly to her repertoire in how she handled stakeholders in negotiation. She now knew the language used in such discourse and her academic knowledge of policy and policy making, she believed, gave her an edge that she would not have without the degree:

> So eh I would use the terminology and language when I'd be speaking with them. I question myself why are you doing that but it's because I want them to know that they are not dealing with an eijit blah, blah, blah ... you have to make sure it's a level playing field and you have to make sure you didn't do what you did before ... the education they got to read documents to get the grants which were going to be available to them and the people who weren't educated got nothing. (Tara, 496-524)

In common with other participants, Tara felt well placed to serve as an example in encouraging others from non-traditional backgrounds to engage in education:

> I like my area. In my social life I live in two worlds now, so for instance, three weeks ago with my original friends, and then was a hen party in Brighton and that was hilarious, eighteen of us carrying on, having the craic, but the weekend before that I had been away with my friends from work and we went away down the country and we went to the pictures, not eh Saturday night, and the opera on the Sunday afternoon, so that was very different. So yeah I sort of live in two different worlds, if you like, so that's changed, drastic, its good craic ... yeah my first friends don't want to meet my second group of friends, but my second group of friends are always looking to meet the first group of friends. (Tara, 509-523)

Tara's experiences exemplify a type of social change. She self identifies strongly as a Dublin working class woman. Her prime focus in coming to college was not instrumental, however she was happy to get a job teaching in a local community scheme. By being a teacher in this setting she acted as a lens through which those from differing social backgrounds, sharing the same space, could view each other. She retained her past connections, continued to enjoy her old pursuits as well as making new connections and enjoying new pursuits. She did not abandon the self that she associated with her working class background in order to pursue the rewards and status associated with a middle class lifestyle, as Bourdieu et al., (1977) suggest as being part of the price necessary in climbing the social hierarchy (Jones, 2012). She did not see this as necessary and in this respect her experiences have more in common with the working class men that Hopper (1981) had encountered in Cambridge[55]. Rather than a change to the self, Tara determined that the social milieu mould to accommodate her. In this sense, Tara was renegotiating the belief of the social class values imbued in education and positioning education as being imbued in the self.

Whereas Tara engaged in the community setting and was recognised as a working class woman who had gone to university, and had come out with a degree and a job, Tash was a working class woman who remained in a university environment and sought to draw the community into Trinity to enjoy aspects that the university had to offer.

[55] Hopper (1981) recounts a story that prompted his interest in studying social mobility. Having been employed as a lecturer at two institutions, the University of Cambridge and the University of Leicester, he noted that men from a working class background attending Cambridge, were far more confident, open about their class backgrounds and accepting of the status of being a student, than those attending Leicester. He was surprised at this, given that Cambridge had a reputation of being an old established elite institution with a lot less demographic heterogeneity, in comparison to Leicester. He concluded therefore that there had to be many dimensions feeding into the concept of social mobility.

Having a strong Dublin working class accent, she believed that she served well as an example that Trinity was open to all and was highly committed to encouraging others of all ages and from all walks of life to engage in education:

> I have a 93 year old man coming to college and he has been coming for three years and he absolutely loves it [*and of another man*] He said "Here I am Patsy O'Rourke in Trinity College loving every minute of it." (Tash, 1128-1133)

She viewed these responses as very important to her personally and also from a broader social perspective in terms of appreciating a broader interpretation of education beyond gaining qualifications:

> I feel education is it's just more rounded than you go to school, you go to college, you get a BA, you get an MA, MSc, a PhD, what does it mean? In the end we are all there together and it [the extra mural courses she designs] brings people to the college community and they are feeling, like, this is wonderful. (Tash, 1130-1133)

In Tash's opinion, encouraging local participation in Trinity is a vital small step towards opening up education and creating a more rounded society as she feels that broad policy measures of themselves are insufficient to change social norms when poverty is still pervasive:

> I think if you were from a housing estate in Clondalkin or a housing estate in Sherrif Street you will not see a blind bit of difference between education now and education twenty years ago because you are still in an area that is really disadvantaged, 80% unemployment and who gives a toss what's really going on in Trinity, whether there's free fees or not it doesn't matter to them anyway....say you have this self starting kid that gets into college or the mature student and the people around them are not educated to it, then there's a gap there, where it has to be more rounded in society (Tash:1153-1163).

Fianna's story offers another perspective on social returns, in that she uses the knowledge garnered through her degree course to facilitate her being dynamic in the pursuit of social justice:

> I am doing a Schools programme ... and some people are "Oh, you are going into schools and all that and you are brainwashing the kids" and I say, "No, I am actually not. I am giving them an informed choice. They won't ever hear about a trade union unless we tell them ... it is challenging, but it is interesting because you think that this could be just so fabulous for second level students to get them involved in politics you know ... and they are kind of, kind of, they are almost ... untouched by the world, they are in school and you know they love the social justice stuff when I talk about the sweat

> factories in sweatshops, people you know knowing their Rights and so forth, mm selling stuff for instance, and showing them videos of the working conditions, you know, they get quite animated. (Fianna, 1455-1472)

Fianna had been involved in the trade union movement prior to coming to Trinity as a training co-ordinator, and had kept up her association with key members of that union. Her appointment to her policy development position was an opportunity to contribute to and direct policy development, which drew heavily on the skills she had learned on her undergraduate degree course. She saw these courses as not only of use in educating students but also their adult teachers:

> A teacher did say to one of the women that goes out for me and she said, "How do students receive this course, how do the poor students receive this"? and em, the woman who gives it said, "Well, I see students as all the same, students are students, what they learn here stands to them in life and, and the other woman she said, "Well most of my girls will be employers". So **** said, "Well I think it's even more important so, employers should know about treating employees correctly and employees rights. (Fianna, 1168-1173)

In terms of social returns, these stories serve as an example of what three women within the cohort appear to be doing, in using education to try and effect social

change. Tara by retaining many aspects of self, including her accent, is capturing the notion of college education as a lived experience suited to anyone from any social milieu. Her example serves to suggest that a higher education does not require or result in a person having to change the way they talk or their manner of being, but rather empowers the self in moving through life. Tash was employed in an administrative position by one of the Schools in Trinity and was zealous in trying to engage a wider community in education, both for the sake of education and the community. She is drawing people into the space of the university to engage in learning. In doing so she is affording them the opportunity to be part of a community (the college community) which is in the heart of Dublin and from which they may have felt excluded. She believed that these are interest courses, without the worry of examination, priced at an affordable level (even according to Tash, for those on benefits) and that these factors act as a pull for those from social backgrounds and also older people, who may feel excluded. Fianna is using her education to provoke others into an understanding and a defence of social justice. Her position in her occupation facilitates her engagement with generations of young adults and with their teachers thus giving her the opportunity to influence their understanding and development beyond the school curriculum.

8.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter opened with a quote which reveals the tensions that exist as to the purpose of education and the economic promise of education by political agents. By exploring the afterlife of being a mature graduate, it has been possible to view this

tension through the prisms of economic, personal and social returns of degree attainment. In terms of economic returns, it would appear that Higher Education did to some extent facilitate employment. Those participants, who found full time work in the State health and education services, were slotted into a hierarchical pay structure linked to qualifications. In addition it may have been a contributory factor in the employment of others who initially owed their employment to their network contacts and/or their previous skill sets. In considering the personal and social returns, of note here is the manner in which none of the participants chose to, or attempted to shed those aspects of self that would denote social background, thus suggesting that they did not see this part of the self as having a subtractive effect on either their experiences as students or as graduates. Neither was much weight given to being older and being a graduate. Most viewed having a degree as having an additive factor for the self and for society. There was no real sense of engaging in higher education as a means to advance vertically up a social hierarchy, rather there was a sense of education facilitating social fluidity in terms of enriching the self and the effect that this would have on other actors within the social milieu.

9 Chapter Nine-Discussion

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have described the relationship that the respondents have had with education throughout their lives, the factors that facilitated their engagement in Higher Education as mature students and their experiences on leaving the academy. Although each life history is unique and complex, the data analysis has revealed nuanced and common patterns that have been presented in four findings chapters: the early years, the bridging years, the college years and the post-college years. These findings are now discussed in this chapter through the medium of the research questions.

9.2 What are the triggers or events that cause people to decide to go to college as mature students?

In essence, the overarching aim of this thesis is to interrogate success stories. At its core, irrespective of social policy adherence, or compliance with the needs of the marketplace, the most parsimonious raison d'être of a university is to facilitate individuals in gaining sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to emerge as graduates equipped with a degree in their field of study. This has been the case for all the participants in this research study. This cohort has been drawn from a population of non traditional students, all being mature students (over the age of 23 in year of

acceptance). In considering the triggers or events that caused these participants to go to college as mature students, the paradigms of Bandura (2001, 2006) concerning critical/fortuitous events and Zajonc (2001) concerning attitude formation were of particular use. In addition, Hopper's (1981) models were useful in paying cognisance to the social structures and the influences and boundaries within which the individual is embedded.

In chapter six, consideration is given to the triggers (critical/fortuitous events) ranging from simple happenstance (chance meetings with friends), to a more formal interaction whereby they met with an outreach educational representative as part of an educational course in which they were participating. Drawing on the theorising of Bandura (outlined in chapter three) these triggers were identified as critical or fortuitous events. This chapter has attempted to answer the research question by drawing attention to the paradigms that were particularly useful in analysing the pertinent data. These critical/fortuitous events have been explained as events occurring that propel the individual towards the academy and the necessity of having a favourable attitude towards education in order to ignite attitude with the event. These events form part of the foci that orient an individual towards education. In attempting to understand why people choose education as a means of effecting change in their lives, it is important to understand how these events factor in the orientation process as they are the first point of orientation towards education. In chapter five, the clock is wheeled back, so to speak, in attempting to understand the social backgrounds of these participants and why they have not participated in this

degree level education previously[56]. In doing so the social background of the individual, their education amount and gender influences were interrogated.

None of the adults who participated in this study, decided to engage in education on a whim. For some (Mildred, Martha and Marymau, for example) it was due to an increase in leisure time brought about by retirement, for others (Fianna and Josie, for example) it was completing unfinished business in the sense that it had always been in the back of their minds to go to third level. Others (Gareth and Harry, for example) saw this step as being a building block in the careers that they desired. However, the events, that awoke the desire to come to college, were often the result of simple happenstance, such as meeting someone who had completed a degree as a mature student, or seeing an advert in a community centre. For others, it was their engagement in community courses and meeting outreach representatives who spoke of bridging pathways into university such as TAP. Others were more active participants in seeking change, in that they were evaluating their careers, making deliberate choices and seeking the college path to ensure they would reach their goals. Bandura (2001, 2006) regards these events as seismic in that they are a catalyst in facilitating change to the trajectory of an individual's life.

The next step occurs when the individual identifies what he/she hopes to happen as a result of engaging in education, in other words, the aims they have when beginning the process. The aims of this cohort were a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

[56] Four of the sample already have third level degrees, three of whom had not gained enough points in their Leaving Certificates to gain entry to their first choice courses.

They included intellectual journeying, building on previous knowledge, gaining skills, gaining a qualification, and equipping oneself for work. Many of the cohort had a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic aims, regardless of their social background, or previous experience. These critical/ fortuitous events and aims have contributed to goal formation which in turn informed the development of typologies of orientation. These four typologies (strategists, fulfilment seekers, transformationalists and builders), are not meant to be exclusive, but suggest patterns of orientation towards education. For instance, Kate has been included in the "Fulfilment Seeker" typology, yet a quote from her narrative on page 248 could suggest that she could equally be classified as a "Transformationalist". However in interrogating her narrative, she placed great emphasis on her engagement with education, believing it to be very important to her sense of self. She wanted to master her foreign language skills primarily for her own satisfaction and only secondarily to increase her employment potential. Therefore, each participant has been allotted to a typology on a "best fit" basis with regard to their attitude towards education as a goal or as a means to an end goal. Using other criteria they may have been allocated to other typologies. These typologies are not exhaustive but of use in identifying the steps taken to engage in education once the trigger event has occurred.

However, although an event might occur, the individual needs to have been somewhat favourably disposed to engaging in education as a means of change. Having a favourable attitude to something, according to Zajonc (2001) can come about by what is termed mere exposure effect, the more you are exposed to a concept the more you develop a positive attitude towards it. Added to the notions of

critical/fortuitous events and positive attitude formation, is the notion of Hopper (1981) that there has to be a sense of insatiability with one's lived experience, even if that experience is broadly satisfactory, that leads an individual to want to effect change in their lives.

Outreach representatives were one example of structural facilitation of change, whereby agents of institutions 'scout' for new members to join the academy and in doing so, like missionaries, bring the possibility of further education to a wider arena. These representatives, being part of various state and institutional structures, have a remit to encourage engagement with education. From a policy perspective, this is a very useful endeavour, as it contributes to tracking through census and similar bureaucratic endeavours, the efficacy of policy initiatives and captures information on how many individuals within a broadly defined education system are encouraged to increase their skills and knowledge sets through education.

Less easily captured is the serendipity associated with life changes. Yet being made aware of the possibility of change, either through chance meetings, spotting an advertisement in a newspaper, or changes in family structure, all have been influential in igniting the agency of the individual in questioning and changing the constraints of their 'lived lives' within their social milieu. Hopper (1981) captured this when speaking of insatiability. The intentions of the individuals in deciding to go take the first steps in controlling this possibility of change, give some idea of what existed in their immediate social and psychological world that facilitated such change, their toolbox, as it were, to take the necessary steps to begin the transformatory process. A bridge was needed

between the space where they now resided and the formal space of third level degree institutions. Hopper et al., (1971) noted the importance of bridging factors in terms of anticipatory socialisation and as being useful in the formation of comparative and normative reference groups. Pre-college courses are an example of such a bridge. With the exception of Annie, all spoke highly of these courses, in terms of confidence building, preparation and loyalty to and from students. The pre-college courses were part of the college community of groups which will be discussed later in this chapter. Acceptance onto one of these programmes, established an amount of educational capital for the individuals which was useful currency in being accepted into formal degree courses. For others, the amalgamation of life experiences exacted sufficient relevant capital to be accepted onto degree courses.

The research questions focuses on the triggers or events specifically, the succinct answer, as evidenced in the data analysis, is that there are a trio of factors that need to be in place prior to an individual deciding to go to college: sense of insatiability-critical/fortuitous event-favourable attitude towards education. Another factor of influence, but not necessarily a trigger or event, is that of the aims of the cohort in coming to college. On occasion the participant did not necessarily have clear cut aims, rather a sense of seizing an opportunity to engage in something novel as it occurred, therefore the aims are considered as influential factors rather than determining factors when considering triggers and events.

9.2.1 Factors influencing the development of favourable attitude

As a first step in attempting to explore the geneses of developing a favourable attitude towards education, the analysis considered the upbringing of the participants in terms of their familial interactions with education. This was done by charting their social background and listening to their narratives about family attitude. The reason that social background was explored and presented in this manner (table5.1) was to explore the patterns of exposure to a variety of SEG, as SEGs are defined (appendix 12) as representing skills and levels off education differentiating categories. Therefore I was interested in the extent to which there was a variety of exposure to different SEGs within the family of origin and whether this could be said to have contributed to an appreciation of education that would not be associated with a particular social milieu. This approach led to the additional discovery of gender effects in pivoting individuals along particular life trajectories.

9.2.2 Social background

Data analysis has shown that aspects of social background have relevance to varying degrees across all the findings chapters. In the course of these respondents' lifetimes they may have experienced membership of, or influence from, different SEGs due to the myriad of different influences that conspire during an individual's lifetime. In the past, women were accorded the status of their spouse/partner's occupation as marriage was seen as a "destination" and thus they achieved the level of their spouse. This viewpoint is muddied in the present day as women have their own occupational

status, however, that viewpoint still refers to housewives and househusbands fully engaged in unpaid home duties.

None of the cohort had intended to follow their fathers into their occupations, although one participant, Kate, eventually followed in her father's footsteps by joining the Gardai. Daithi's family (who ran a family business) had encouraged him (on leaving school) to focus on business subjects rather than arts which would have been his inclination. In table 5.2 the mothers who had their own occupations had these charted and those who were housewives were, as is custom, given the SEG of their husband's occupation. Whilst not following mothers (who were in paid employment) into their occupations, many were none the less influenced by their mothers' vision for the future, for instance Gareth put emphasis on the focus his mother put on his schooling and others such as Fianna, Tash talked of the push into secretarial schools. Overall, taking into account the SEG of father, mother, spouse/partner, we can deduce that although individuals were exposed to different SEGs, this exposure was small, often just one or two levels up or down the SEG classification, therefore following the logic of SEG, it would not seem likely that the attraction of education could be explained by exposure to higher levels of SEG, with respect to the experiences of this sample.

The next step in this analysis was to look beyond the label of the SEG and attempt to explore the relationship between levels of SEG and education, in order to see whether specific levels of SEG were indeed associated with specific levels of education. I was also interested in looking beyond the credentials acquired by individuals and instead exploring the amount of education they had been exposed to, as amount of education

was a variable of social mobility noted by Hopper (1981). In order to do this a modification of the CASMIN education classification was used to reflect the amount of education that was facilitated by the family of origin (nested years) within the specificities of their social milieu. This approach is prompted by the fact that individuals go through the education process up to a particular level, and this in itself exerts some influence on their cognitions and behaviour through those years and/or beyond.

Bourdieu et al., (1990) viewed the education system as a vehicle through which educational capital can be conferred but not necessarily the associated status. By developing the constructs of cultural capital, habitus and field, they have offered explanation of how dominant ideologies perpetuate and how difference in either of these three constructs inhibit an individual in gaining the same rewards as his/her peers. Institutions have a level of educational capital and associated status that form a dominant ideology for that particular institution, which meshes with the cultural capital and values of the student body walking through its doors, each perpetuating and reinforcing the other. The relationship from this perspective and the reason for individual participation in such a system is clear; the power, progression, roles and expectations all cohere to provide a particular social identity. As discussed in chapter three, social identity models offer further explanation in combining the individual's self concept, the significance of group membership and the wider social context in which this group functions (Tajfel, 2010). Therefore there is a collective perception of social unity that leads to co-operative social interaction and communication which develops into an "organised system of status, roles, social norms and shared values" (Turner,

2010:15). Social cohesion models offer in addition that an affective basis is necessary for the status quo to perpetuate. There has to be an attraction to the group (in this case the institution) or from the group (in this case towards the students) which would be based on direct or indirect rewards that group members mediate for each other (Tajfel, 2010). These approaches are in accord with Hopper (1981) and Hopper et al's., (1975) findings that from early in life, an individual travels on a particular pathway mediated by family, the educational route available, occupational opportunities all nested within the ecology of the near environment. Therefore all offer plausible explanation for the perpetuation of social and cultural mores within life trajectories.

Bourdieu et al's (1977) theoretical approach offers explanation as to the outcome for an individual outside of the group identity (pertinent to that educational institution) engaging in a particular system. Social identity and social cohesion models, offer explanation of group membership from cognitive and affective perspectives. However, their approach has, in a sense, developed a deficiency model in explaining the limitations affecting the "other" in terms of social class or SEG background and social identity and social cohesion models do not adequately address the results of incorporating alternatives to the structure of groups and as a consequence, rippling out, to society. Hopper's (1981) approach in considering the subjective and the objective is useful in that it offers explanation as to why individuals choose to deviate from a particular life-trajectory by paying cognisance to the insatiability present in individuals who want to engage in education to levels and in institutions not necessarily considered normal within their social milieu, at an age beyond which is the norm for third level attendance, and their willingness to engage in groups where

perhaps they do not have a shared history, similar social status, shared values or perhaps even any affective basis for other group members. He also examines the objective social acceptance in terms of groups by reflecting on the permeability of boundaries and the extent to which status rigidity is evident and manifests itself in relationships between the individual and this new group setting.

Therefore Hopper's conceptual approach has been particularly useful in interpreting the data, in terms of attempting to understand the relationship individuals have had with education from their early years, and to test the notion of exposure within the family and immediate social sphere to alternative SEGs affecting the need (now exercised as adults), to join those SEGs by way of education. It was found that there was little exposure to a variety of SEGs in the early years and so therefore the attraction of education being due to familiarity with SEGs outside of the social milieu is weak. Grouping the respondents by amount of education received and SEG of origin, rather than by level achieved, there is some evidence of an association between SEG and specific academic progress within any era. However, as discussed in this chapter, this must be interpreted with caution as the clustering of "A" SEGs in groups 4c and 4d represents an array of different occupations with different economic and social returns, requiring different levels of skills and education.

In answering the research question this section has examined changes in the SEG between family of origin and adult status prior to coming to Trinity as mature students. There was evidence to the same degree of both upward and downward social mobility. The group showing most upward social mobility was that Group 4A, those who had

done some form of secretarial course, and the group showing the most downward social mobility was 4C (diploma, specialist training, sub-degree). Group 4D (Degree level) showed the same level of downward mobility as Group 3 (Leaving Certificate or equivalent). This could be regarded as resonating with Whelan et al's., (2004) findings that the association between education and destination has diminished, and that employers may be placing greater weight on aspects other than qualifications, although qualifications in and of themselves remain important (ibid).

Hopper's (1981) argument suggests that education acts as a systemic correction. Therefore, those that have ability (for instance, this cohort) will be facilitated by education in attaining that of which they are capable. In a sense the experience of this cohort both proves and disproves this statement. The fact that an eventual return to education facilitates the acquisition of degree level education, does suggest that a systemic correction was performed. However, the fact that such progression had not occurred in comparable times on the life-cycle and life-trajectory would suggest that education was a tool of social control.

9.2.3 Decoupling the life-trajectory and the life-cycle

Having contextualised the data in terms of social background and interaction of SEG with education, the analysis sought, in a sense, to isolate aspects of the individual's life with reference to Hopper's conception of having a life-cycle and a life-trajectory running in parallel. This is aligned with the concepts of stage theories of development

(chapter three, section 3.2). Therefore an adult engaging in higher education, (other than as part of an ongoing employment programme) is deviating from that parallel sequence of lived experience. In creating a decoupling model of parallel progression I wanted to see if I could isolate elements (other than social background), that may have mitigated against the participant either remaining in education or having doubts about their ability to remain in education. Mindful of the importance of early influences on development, and the importance of the immediate social sphere, the analysis identified three particular relationships with individuals (that the participant was a party to) that were influential: parents, teachers and friends. Analysis suggested that these could be allocated to three different spheres: supportive, complacent or toxic. If an individual was supportive, this was taken to mean that they were engaged with the participant to the extent that they sought to promote educational ambitions either within or beyond the social norms of their specific social milieu. An example of this would be Gareth's mother whom he referred to as Mrs. Education, or Seansher's mum who although timid, supported his efforts in attempting to do his Leaving Certificate. If they were complacent then they accepted the status quo and did not seek to belittle or encourage beyond the social norms within their specific social milieu. An example of this was Linda, whose mother did not tell her to leave school when her father died, but accepted the fact that she did so, despite Linda being considered as particularly clever by her teachers. If an individual was toxic, then they would have bullied, discouraged or contributed to creating a dysfunctional environment. Either one or more agents in the parent/teacher/peer sphere would have engaged in some manner in belittlement or discouraged educational progression or endeavour in the

participant. Anthony is someone who would have encountered toxic agents in all three spheres.

Table 5.6 evidences the occurrence of toxic, complacent and supportive agents that the participant encountered during their maturation years in the school system. It has been developed with the proviso that it is a model simple (figure 5.1), it does not, for instance, seek clarification of the relationship that the participant had with all teachers (seeking a measure of toxic versus complacent versus supportive) or with both parents, or with all peers. Testing in this manner could add to the validity and reliability of the model in the sense that, having a complete picture of all possible interactions with parents, teachers and peers, could facilitate additional empirical analysis, for instance regression analysis which would pay cognisance to the weight of each category and provide additional nuances in interpretation. However, this model grew from the analysis of the narratives of the sample and does not have the level of detail to effect a-statistical analysis. What it serves to do, however, is to provide rich contextual detail and highlight the maladaptive effect of toxicity, sufficient to factor in derailing parallel progression in a ratio of 1:2. This is an important factor to note as it happened across eras, gender, and social background. I do not claim that this is the only factor to derail parallel progression, but it is a factor that can have long lasting effects on the individual's confidence in their educational ability. Ultimately, this model highlights the potentially damaging effects of contact with maladaptive influences (toxic) in the principal spheres during the early years, thus suggesting that same influences can be damaging to the psyche and development of the individual. The standing of education within the family, the support mechanisms available to the

individual to remain in education within his/her milieu and the availability of good institutional support and encouragement are some of the factors that influence the parallel progression of an individual's life-cycle and life-trajectory.

Having explored the social background of the sample, their amount of education and the agents within their social sphere who may have factored in decoupling the parallel progression of their life-cycle and life-trajectory, attention turned to the influence of gender in perpetuating the social norms of their time. This highlighted the effects of mothers and of fathers in garnering education amounts and also in the direction of their offspring's' (participants in the sample) lives even after they had finished their formal level of schooling.

Noted about mothers was the manner in which they were directive and supportive, often perpetuating stereotypical gendered occupations. This is evidenced in the use of secretarial, commercial, language courses as a level of training beyond the primary and secondary level to prepare females for specific employment. Many of the women in the sample (Kate, Tash, Fianna, Maisie and Monamon) completed some form of secretarial course, which was, with the exception of Maisie at the behest of their mothers. These courses were available at two junctures in the secondary cycle, being available to those who had completed their Leaving Certificates, they were also available to those who would have left halfway through the senior cycle. These commercial and secretarial courses, geared females to office work. For those such as Tash, doing such a course was viewed as an upwardly mobile move: "get the best education that you can, you know, the lads always had to get a trade the girls had to

get a secretarial course you know" (Tash, 32-33) whereas for others such as Tara, Mcnamon, Fianna and Maisie such courses were considered a relevant route within their social milieu to getting an appropriate job.

Anthony and Seansher both came from dysfunctional backgrounds and both would have made reference to their mothers; Seansher in terms of his mother's support for his endeavours to stay in school despite his father's disapproval, and Anthony in terms of lack of support from his mother, who was an alcoholic, and the bullying that he endured throughout his schooling. Both men continued with their academic education following their undergraduate years, Seansher completing a Masters, and Anthony completing a Doctorate, Seansher feeling at ease with his education and additional benefits (such as belonging to TAP) whereas Anthony has continued to have difficulties with his mental health and with social relationships and events.

Another gendered aspect noted in the narratives was the limitations set on education of women. For instance Maisie noted that girls were not encouraged to reach their potential, and that there was an assumption that whatever you did after school in the sixties and seventies really did not matter because the view was you were just passing time until you got married. This was compounded by the reflections of a similarly aged woman who said that some exam papers, for instance the Intermediate pass maths paper had "girls only" written across the top. This serves as an example of education performing systemic errors rather than corrections in situating women in a supportive rather than an equal role with their male counterparts. The assumption that brothers would go to third level as expressed naturally in dialogue with Monamon, Greta and

Maisie, serves as example as to how this social norm of prioritising male education was perpetuated within families.

9.2.4 Answer summary.

This chapter has attempted to answer the research question by drawing attention to the paradigms that were particularly useful in analysing the pertinent data. The triggers or events have been explained in terms of the necessity of critical/fortuitous events occurring that propel the individual towards the academy and the necessity of having a favourable attitude towards education. The clock is wheeled back, so to speak, in attempting to understand the social backgrounds of these participants and why they have not participated in this degree level education previously[57]. In doing so the social background of the individual, their education amount and gender influences were interrogated.

9.3 What are their assumptions?

Few assumptions were made, but those that were made encompassed all stages of the journey through education. Some individuals lacked confidence in their ability to engage in education. Maisie, for instance had proved herself capable through her voluntary work (helping children with physical disabilities) and had the support and active encouragement of her peers and husband in applying for a college course.

[57] Four of the sample already have third level degrees, three of whom had not gained enough points in their Leaving Certificates to gain entry to their first choice courses.

Maisie had a comfortable lifestyle and spoke fondly of her family and of the work environment where she volunteered. Her case is an exemplar of the far reaching agentic influences in the early stages of development. However, she lacked self belief, feeling that she was not clever enough, a throwback to her experiences in school. Maisie therefore assumed she couldn't do it, but with encouragement kept on trying. It took two attempts and the advice given by an interviewer regarding bridging courses before she was accepted into her chosen course. This highlights the far reaching effects of early powerful others and how difficult it can be to extinguish early maladaptive influences.

9.3.1 Sense of belonging

Before entering the academy some of the respondents had made the assumption that Trinity was for the 'other', that they did not belong and would be tapped on the shoulder and asked to leave by security guards. This was articulated by some individuals with respect to their own social background more so than age. All who had commented on this found this feeling to disappear over their time in college, as they became comfortable in their surroundings, engrossed in their courses and formed friendships. It could be that their initial apprehension was a fear of the unknown and an imposition on the self of status rigidity in terms of feeling different to the perceived majority. It is also somewhat difficult to change regular behaviour and habit. However, daily immersion and exposure to life within the academy may well support Zajonc's (2001) proposition that the more you are exposed to something the more you develop a positive attitude towards it.

However it could be argued that Anthony's case was an exception to this in that he never felt accepted. He developed an interest in his degree subject matter through exposure to similar content as part of his rehabilitation work. His opinion of the majority of students being privileged did not change throughout his time in Trinity. However the counter-argument offered is that Anthony self selected not to engage in those clubs and societies in the semi formal groups and selected to engage in clubs that he regarded as full of "oddballs." Therefore his understanding of self in terms of his social interaction difficulties set boundaries rigidly in place, whereas Maisie could overcome her boundaries (regarding ability and confidence) due to support from her family and colleagues.

A somewhat different assumption was made by Tara, who completed a TAP course and then got a place on her degree course. This assumption was that mature entry into third level was for those from working class backgrounds. She described herself as being working class, and had thought that all mature students would come from a similar background to her and would "speak the way I speak", however she was of the opinion that the majority of mature students were middle class adults who did not avail of a third level education when they were younger through choice or by touring or holidaying instead, whereas from her perspective she would never have been in a position to make that choice. An opposite viewpoint was made by Josie, an individual from a middle class social background who had toured Europe following secondary school. She felt that the advent of free fees and the provision of bridging courses such as TAP were important as all kinds of people from all levels of society at all stages in

life got an opportunity to engage in third level education. Her assumption was that someone from her social background would value education, to the extent that they would borrow money if possible to attend college, whereas someone from:

> A lower class background possibly wouldn't because their mindset is not about education, possibly, I'm not saying all people in lower class, but you know possibly that's not the mindset. They'll go on two or three holidays a year, you know, they'll buy a nice car. (Josie, 498-501)

Both these women were comfortable in their particular social backgrounds and had made assumptions about attributes and attitudes of people in other social categories. Both greatly enjoyed their experiences at college and made friendships across different disciplines, with people of different ages and from a variety of social backgrounds, whilst still retaining allegiance to what they perceived as the status effects of their own social background.

One aspect of the person, that many felt marked them out as different, more so than their age, was their accent. Accent, they asserted, marked you out as coming from particular social backgrounds. From this assumptions would be made that could lead to negative connotations, with some (Tara, for instance) speaking of the association made by traditional students of having a particular accent with a drug habit or a presumption that the student had come in through an alternative pathway as part of a rehabilitation programme. The alternative was also true in that some spoke of the

traditional students having "D4" accents which they associated with privilege. Tash felt inhibited in talking aloud in class at the beginning of her university career as she felt her accent was so different to the others in the class. However, this changed over her time in the academy and she became comfortable in talking and participating. Accents therefore, in this thesis, were regarded as a dominant marker of cultural capital and a determinant of social background. In possessing an accent assumptions were made (a) of the individual by others in the college groups, and (b) of others by the individual in the college groups. This is in keeping with Bourdieu's (1986, 17) notion of "the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body." However, this visible difference was negotiated successfully. None of the individuals, who felt their accents denoted their social background, ever spoke of trying to change this feature, in order to fit in with the student community and broader college group. Rather they grew comfortable in their surroundings, finding and using their own voice. This calls into question the concept of group behaviour which according to Turner et al., (1987) requires not a loss of self so much as altering aspects of self and self definition which consequentially will change norms, values and beliefs which guide behaviour. In this instance it was not necessary to alter a very visible aspect of the self to fit in with the social identity most associated with the college community. Rather the college community, the group, had to be malleable enough to absorb variety in accents and reflect that diversity in its social identity. It is in keeping with Hopper's findings with respect to distance, whereby the greater distance between social backgrounds (between majority social class background within the academy and those from a minority social class background joining the academy), the more at ease the individual from the minority social class feels within the academy

and deserving of the status and/or financial rewards that membership of the institution may bring.

9.4 How did they relate to academic staff and traditional aged students within college?

In a sense this research question is incomplete as was apparent in the interview sessions. Responses tended to turn this question around and talk of how academic staff and traditional aged students responded to the individual themselves. This and the following question are dealt with in detail in chapter five, with the unpicking of group membership. This was done by creating a group grid, based on the narratives of the participants. This group grid created four separate possible groups within the college community: formal, informal, supportive and semiformal. For the most part, people were happy with their interactions with academic staff, finding them helpful and accommodating. There were some exceptions to this, for example, Harry felt that there was no leeway given when he needed unanticipated and serious surgery and that he was expected to keep up with his classmates or leave the course. In this instance the subject matter was being prioritised over the student, so the status of the course bore more weight than the concerns of the individual. Status was also a feature in considering an academic's contribution to and presentation of knowledge which was, to the surprise of Tara, regarded more highly than the experiential knowledge based on lived experience. This suggests status rigidity on the part of the core group member (in this case an academic) which prioritised college knowledge over experiential knowledge. This suggests a "banking" approach to education as

described by Friere (1972), rather than an interactive one where knowledge is a two-way process and is resultant from learning as an on-going and creative process informed by formal learning and informal everyday experiences which would be a feature of Mezirow's (1991) model of education.

During their time in college, all in this sample had made friendships, either with those they regarded as "people like them" which was particularly evident in the case of Anthony and Seansher. Anthony only felt at ease within one particular social group in Trinity (semi formal), which he claimed attracted "misfits" like himself. Seansher mixed with people of all ages from all backgrounds but strongly identified as a working class man and sought out those from the same social background within the college community. One surprising element to emerge in the study that impacted on friendships was smoking and the importance of "smoker's corner." A number of students, including those that did not smoke, spoke of friendships being formed in smoking areas. In this space, age barriers did not matter, smokers spoke to smokers, with non-smokers frequenting the area as well.

Gender differences were also noted in the relationships or the regard given to mature men or mature women. Gareth was clear that he preferred to mix with the younger students rather than the mature adults on his course. He believed his goals were different to the mature students, in that many of them, he believed, came to college to find themselves. He was quite focused on his specific game plan, which included having a psychology degree as a building block in forming his own company. He enjoyed the company of younger students, and felt they orientated to him as he was a

family man with a young child. Daithi in his early forties was the eldest student on his course which had a small overall cohort. Like Gareth he did not identify as a mature student, rather as a student. He said he was included as part of the group but as a married man had responsibilities at home. He was also careful not to be seen "as the dirty old man trying to hit on the younger girls you know that's one of the things" (Daithi, 533). The women in the sample noted that over the four years, the younger students became more comfortable with the presence of older students and tended to confide in them and come for advice regarding boyfriends and other personal problems. None of the men in the sample ever said that they were approached to give advice on personal matters. All the women in the sample would have noted that friendships amongst different ages grew over time, suggesting support once more for Zajonc's (2001) proposition of liking that with which we are familiar.

9.5 What (if any) support systems did they value within the home and within the college?

The support systems discussed by the participants were broad ranging, encompassing State support (in terms of the "free fees" scheme, back to education grants, and allowances for travel), support within the college community (for instance the supportive, informal and semi formal groups within the college community) and the support offered within the private sphere. Many talked of the "free fees" scheme as being a vital component in facilitating their return to education. This national and institutional facilitation helped to evoke change in the trajectory of most of these individuals. Those on second degrees had to pay fees even if their first degree had not

been part of the scheme. It was not a "free degree" that the person was entitled to, rather the opportunity to have a third level education. It should be remembered however that many students did have to pay a contribution towards their attendance at college in the form of a student registration.

9.5.1 Preparation

Also valued in terms of support or preparation for the college experience was participation on some form of precollege course. Ten of the eleven individuals who had engaged in these courses found them to be very useful. Successful participation in these courses are of great benefit in preparing individuals for the rigors of academic study, assistance with the somewhat onerous application process, and in attempting to secure a place on a third level degree course. An additional benefit of these courses was the loyalty that they engendered in some of the participants towards the ethos of the course and the staff and new students engaged in the course. This was particularly evident in the stories of the mature students who had participated in TAP. Some of the mature adult students, during their time on their degree courses, stayed engaged in the TAP community, tutoring oncoming students. Such action, serves, once again to highlight the transformative nature of education as theorised by Mezirow (1991), for example, Seansher brought his acquired knowledge as well as his lived knowledge, into play in supporting students and the TAP that Trinity had in place encouraged and facilitated this. It also suggests the beginning of change in the constituency of the student population within the academy.

9.5.2 College community

Participants found support from all the groups within the college community. In terms of the formal group, participants noted the occasions when some lecturers and tutors went beyond their remit and gave additional help. An example of this was given by Shiela, who spoke of a lecturer giving extra classes for the mature students as many of them (now nursing students) had never done biology during their time in school. However, particularly relevant in answering this research question, was the supportive group within the college community. This group comprises of ancillary services provided by Trinity College to complement the academic endeavours of students and to support their general well being and welfare. They comprise of services such as the pastoral service, health service, student learning services, counselling services, career guidance services and TAP. Participation in TAP and other pre-college courses was of great benefit in preparing individuals for the rigors of academic study, assistance with the somewhat onerous application process, and in attempting to secure a place on a third level degree course. Other support services that have been highlighted in the findings include the pastoral services, the counselling service, the learning support centre and the careers service.

Semi-formal groups were also of support to these participants during their time in college. Groups included under the semi-formal umbrella were social and voluntary groups which were subject to rules of conduct as part of the overall college community. However in this sample few of the participants engaged in a regular or

meaningful way with social or voluntary groups although many joined them during fresher's week.

This was the area where participants exercised most choice with respect to their group membership. Mature students who were parents prioritised their time with family. Those that did engage in groups did so based on outside interests, photography, history, table tennis, rather than adopting new hobbies or interests.

The support that participants received from the informal group was considered very important. The informal group referred to friendship groups that built up organically between people. As with membership of social groups, there was little free time for building friendships. However, participants managed to do so, forging friendships during coffee breaks between lectures, or in one case with staff in the cloakrooms. Kevin, a Chinese national, added an interesting cultural dimension to this discussion. He had difficulty understanding the concept of friendship and also leisure time. When asked about joining societies he replied that he would have had no time or interest. When asked how he spent leisure time or how he interacted with friends, he made a similar reply, but said that he had friends, the people he worked with or studied with, and that the friendship activity was either talking whilst working or talking whilst studying. He, his wife and his children prioritised work and study, and built into that conversations and supports, he did not conceptualise spare time or free time as separate time for leisure and pleasure. In terms then of social mobility, Kevin was seeking occupational mobility and increased salary, so the concept of acceptance by in groups and out-groups, and the core and periphery of groups was of very little concern

to him, as his interest did not lie in any ancillary status that could be associated with occupational mobility. Nevertheless his approach and concerns are adequately summated by Hopper in that:

> The facts are also that when one says that adult students are highly motivated, what one means is that they want to learn because they want to earn more and be recognised as advancing more generally. (Hopper et al, 1975: iii)

9.6 How did the process of going to college and emerging as a degree holder effect employment, personal outcomes and social opportunities?

Chapter eight explores in depth the experiences of this sample following their time in college. Eighteen of the twenty four gained employment, although of that eighteen, four had only been able to find limited part-time work. Two had set up their own businesses, Gareth having had this intention prior to pursuing the degree and Kate having decided to do so in the final years of studying for the degree. Hopper's concept of status rigidity would suggest that difficulty could emerge in the workforce in the sense that status groups could be considered mutually exclusive in terms of lifestyle habits which are difficult to shed or acquire once one has passed through childhood. However of those in employment in this cohort, many felt that they owed their current employment, or indeed their current voluntary work, to networks they were members of prior to pursuing a degree, suggesting that the social capital they had built up in

earlier years was not displaced or extinguished by their subsequent educational experiences. Therefore, education had an additive effect on the individual. The cultural and social capital that individuals had accrued through the course of their lives does not appear to have been extinguished through their time in Trinity or afterwards.

Fifteen of this sample continued on in education, some over lapping this with employment. This would have been anticipated by four in this cohort, Gareth who had a clear direction of the qualifications needed in starting his own business, Kate had gained her teaching language qualification in tandem with her degree course, as it would be a requirement for her start up company. For Ursula and Harry, working in medicine and dentistry respectively required some form of specialisation and thus further qualifications were necessary. In Ray's case, his initial degree had paved the way to get involved in another career path which saw a move into academia. He elected to change career and as a result had to complete additional exams in his chosen field. In the case of the other students three went on to complete PhDs in their respective fields. This had not necessarily been their intention when beginning their undergraduate study, but grew from interest in their subject or lack of available employment. The remaining eight had completed a variety of Masters and Higher Diploma courses. Daithi has undergone three diploma and master's courses since finishing his primary degree, in the hope of making himself more employable. At present he is on a jobbridge scheme, but he hopes at the end of this to be able to get a full time job, rather than a few hours part-time work. Martha and Mildred, both retired, had completed Master's courses as an ongoing interest in their subject. They have no wish to proceed to PhD level, and are both pursuing their interest by either

attending public lectures or following up on research that is of personal interest. Whilst engaged on their undergraduate course, or very shortly after finishing, Greta, Seansher, Kevin and Annie had all decided to continue to the next level in order to upskill in the hope of getting employment in their field of interest. Annie was unsuccessful in doing so, although she got plenty of opportunity to do voluntary work in her field of interest, which was adult education, she became very angry at what she saw as a closed shop in terms of employment in this arena. She also regarded official rhetoric as flawed, in that adults were encouraged to engage in learning but then were not given the opportunity to inform development in the field. She believed that those from her social class background, having gone through university, would have something of value to offer and believed that education:

> [It] is not really properly ... scrutinised, people at the bottom were the most vulnerable with the most problems, cannot really speak for themselves so therefore they are just being doled out what the people at the top think is appropriate for them. (Annie, 633-636)

These comments also evidence the usefulness of Hopper's approach. Group intransience existed in that accommodation and acceptance only go so far. The group, those already employed and those engaged in adult education (possibly in part through financial restraint), retain practises and power. Thus power renders the practise static and does not give voice or agency to others who seek to contribute in this area. In essence then, the systemic correction afforded to Annie in the form of access to third level education, from a Hopperian viewpoint is faulty. The area Annie

wanted to work in remains stratified, exhibiting status rigidity with those within safeguarding their position and influence. Annie was prevented in achieving her goal with respect to comparative goal orientation, in that her embeddedness in the group (employed teachers) was low and thus her experience unsatisfactory. The fact that a significant proportion of graduates thought that the need to engage in a fourth level course was necessary, offers some support for the argument that education and occupations continue to be stratified. If fourth level education qualifications are required, only those with time and sufficient money or the ability to attract grants or scholarship, will be in a position to equip themselves with qualifications that afford choice and opportunity (Hopper, 1975; Karabel, 2006).

None of the cohort regretted going to college, although some may have chosen different courses if they had their time over again. This was as a consequence of not being qualified to work in their field of interest without getting a further qualification, rather than not having enjoyed the course they had taken and the knowledge they had acquired. Education for all, was something they wanted to engage in and they all succeeded in completing their degree courses. Some needed longer to complete than four years, as they were beset by ill health or crises in confidence. In some cases, personal relationships showed sign of strain, however in no instance did attending university result in a relationship breakdown, although it exacerbated the process of the breakdown of already unhappy marriages in two cases.

Being a recipient of a degree was of intrinsic value to these individuals, regardless of whether they pursued further study or occupation. The older participants particularly

were pleased to keep their brains active by pursuing rigorous study. There was ample evidence of a ripple down effect with many individuals happy that they were setting good example to their children and to others in their family and community. However, there was also evidence of resentment, even if slight, in the stories of some respondents. Linda believed that there was an atmosphere between some of her friends and family and herself as a result of her going to college and did wonder if that was due to her attending Trinity more so than another college. She thought some people may have thought she was "getting above herself" or, if she was using her knowledge to explain the background of treatment plans to others through her voluntary work, she thought some might have regarded this as being a "know all" . Others spoke of similar experiences, Tash and Annie both used the phrase of getting above one's station in life to describe the attitude of some of her neighbours and family. Although Tash found most of her family to be extremely supportive but somewhat perplexed that she was studying at all, rather than getting a job now that her children were at school. Her family continued to hold a functionalist view of education, presuming when she had finished her course she would now be better placed to get a job. When she finished her education at PhD level, her family were proud that she had a job in Trinity more so than she had a PhD:' I could be a cleaner in Trinity and it would be oh you are working in Trinity it's great'.(Tash:957-958). Linda appreciated the formalised aspect of her experience "It certainly gave it more authenticity you know rather than just something I picked up this is just information it is now knowledge I am here in Trinity." (Linda, 1051-1052)

In terms of a social return, in addition to engagement in voluntary work, there was a sense for some of being ambassadors for adult engagement in education. Throughout his time in college, Seansher's continuing relationship with TAP, (in terms of tutoring oncoming students and offering support) and in terms of his socialising, he identified as a working class man, encouraging others from a similar social class background to believe in themselves and engage in third level education. Tash saw value in encouraging Dubliners, who had lived in the city all of their lives and thought of Trinity and education in alien terms, to reconsider the space and place of Trinity as their own. She did this by organising and promoting extra mural courses, which were priced competitively. In addition, she got to know many of the older students attending, meeting them regularly for coffee, engaging in conversation regarding the subject matter, and encouraging them to continue with their courses. Tara worked in the community as a teacher, and considered herself as exemplifying the possibility of engaging in education regardless of the lack of previous educational achievement or social background. She also saw her employment as important, not only as evidence of the possibility of that level of employment as a result of holding a degree, but also as an example to her middle-class colleagues that the field of education was not to be colonised by middle-class aspirants, rather it was now a rite of passage achievable by those from working class backgrounds who wished to retain social capital and status attached to their particular social background. These three examples evidence a particular social return of a third level education, in that each individual sought to assure that education was available to people from social backgrounds other than middle class and upwards, and to assure that education was open to all regardless of

age. These returns serve the oft ignored social aspect of European and National policies.

9.7 Has a third level education changed their ways of thinking, their behaviours or their routine habits?

As remarked upon by many, and succinctly phrased by Linda:

> I think I see everything differently now because you can't not know stuff you know ... it's like your eyes are open to something and you cannot not see stuff anymore. (Linda, 1116-1117)

The training in critical thinking and the training to question permeated the thinking, behaviour and habits of many following their time at university. Although Fianna had always read *The Economist* and the *Financial Times*, she felt that she now read with a more informed understanding and ability to critique the content. Seansher felt similarly regarding his interest in writing. Annie, without regret, lost a lot of friends, due to the change in her way of thinking and conversing:

> You are a threat to them and they think you are showing off sometimes ... you can't introduce anything because they say " Oh there she goes again" ... I think that is what made me want to go into

education because suburbia is a horrible place, a horrible place, I call it the concrete jungle. (Annie, 462-468)

Reading, thinking and conversing, was where change was most evident in the behaviour of this cohort. Bourdieu's concept of habitus being associated with particular fields, and those from working class backgrounds not being equipped with the appropriate habitus to operate within that field or to acquire the status benefits appropriate to that field, does not seem to be appropriate for this cohort. Hopper's findings (echoed in Reay, 2009) of increasing levels of comfort with acquired skills and habits, are added to the repertoire of mature students from all social backgrounds.

Their educational experiences seem to have added to their enjoyment and practise of their interests. Nobody appeared to shed aspects of self or to feel that they had personal negative capital that they had to shed, overall the educational capital they amassed has served to enrich the self.

9.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to discuss the findings of the study through the lens of the research questions. In doing so it draws on the evidence presented in the data analysis chapters. The theoretical approaches of Bandura (2001, 2006), Zajonc (2001) and Hopper (1981) have been particularly useful in attempting to understand and explain the triggers or events that prompted people to deviate from their own particular life

trajectories and engage in studies at an advanced level. Bourdieu et al., (1977) and Hopper (1981) have both been useful referents in terms of attempting to unpick the relationship between social background and education. Consequently, the notion of group membership was explored in terms of non/belonging and identity. This was explored with reference to paradigms of group membership and also to the social groups the individuals are exposed to from early on in life, principally family and school environments. This chapter then went on to investigate the assumptions of individuals and their sense of belonging. An aspect of particular note was the possession and recognition of an accent. In some instances individuals had been somewhat self conscious about speaking in a different manner to the majority of traditional students, seeing it as a distinctive marker of cultural capital. However, it seems, for this cohort at TCD, that this distinctive marker has taken its place in the academy. The college and home support systems that were discussed, underlined the importance of familial support and college support, highlighting both positives and negatives. The provision of "free fees" had been instrumental for many in facilitating their journey as mature students.

Life after college was probed, in order to gauge the effect of a degree on an individual's employment, personal and social situations. One unexpected outcome for some of the participants was continuation in education. In some cases this was driven by a need to upskill, whereas for others it was driven by an interest in the subject matter of their undergraduate degree. There was a mixed response to the value of a degree in terms of gaining recognition and employment, with some expressing great disappointment and others expressing a belief that the status and the nature of the

education that they had received was well regarded within the broader community even if it had not resulted in the type of employment that they would have hoped for. The last question focused on the self, and sought to find out whether participants thought they had changed in any way following their third level education. Critical thinking and casting a critical gaze were two aspects that were noted by some participants. However, overall, education seems to have been valued for its additive effects, regardless of social background, as no one expressed a need to alter or shed aspects of the self in order to fit in with the traditional group of students attending Trinity.

10 Chapter Ten - Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis, recalling the objectives, the conceptual and methodological approaches, before moving on to offer a précis of the findings chapters. Following on, a critique on the merits and usefulness of using social mobility as a theoretical framework, in particular Hopper's approach, is offered. The chapter draws to a close by reflecting on the limitations, and contributions, to this field of research, resulting from the thesis.

10.2 Chapter overview

This research sought to explore the experiences of mature students who had undergone a third level education. To reduce the effect of institutional variables, the research was situated in Trinity College Dublin. As a starting point, a comprehensive literature review was conducted which charted the growth of lifelong learning, over the last five decades, from an international and national perspective. A critique of lifelong learning was then offered which cast a lens on the dominant arguments within the arena, including the charge that neoliberalism has captured the education agenda and that the lack of social equality evident in the demographics of third level education. An exposition of mature students' experiences in third level education in was then offered by reviewing pertinent Irish and International research studies. The

conceptual chapter that followed elaborated on some of the theoretical paradigms that are of interest in understanding the experiences of the mature students. These included theories on (but not limited to) group behaviour, social identity and social categorisation. In terms of gaining insight into the effectiveness of social policy in facilitating equality in the education of adults in third level, Hopper's (1981) concept of social mobility was used in framing the study. Following on from this the methodology chapter detailed the design, recruitment of participants, and the procedure of the study. A life history approach was adopted, in order to capture the range of influences and experiences that inform and impact on the development of an individual.

10.2.1 Findings Chapters

Analysis of the data is dealt with in four chapters. The first chapter (chapter five) detailed life before coming to university, beginning with reflections on childhood and the family of origin, interactions with the education system, and employment patterns within the family of origin and the adult family. As social mobility definitions focus on movement or the opportunity for movement between social strata, with social strata linked to occupational groups, this chapter explored the two stratifications used in the Irish domain, by the CSO, social class and socio economic groups. In discussing social background, social class is the term most commonly used in policy documents (for instance OECD, UNESCO and HEA reports referred to in chapter two) and in research studies (for instance Hopper, 1981; Bourdieu et al., 1977; Reay, 2002). Social class refers to occupations (rated 1 to 7, 1 being occupations with the highest level of skill required) which have been grouped together based on the skill sets necessary to

perform that occupation and pay no reference to levels of education. Social economic group (SEG) performs a similar function in having a list of ten different groups, which cluster people according to their occupation and employment status but does pay cognisance to the level of educational attainment required to do the job. Both scales group people by employment and economic status. Social class is determined on a ranked basis, socio economic groups are not defined as ranked in socio economic importance. Yet both classifications are remarkably similar in the types of occupations included at each level of group description, with SEG being more discrete in having ten categories as opposed to social class having seven. In addition education level is of importance in SEG categorisation. This chapter focuses on exploring the history of educational attainment by the individual within the family of origin and as an adult, and the relevance of that education to the employment history within that person's social milieu. Therefore, in this chapter, the detail provided by the SEG categorisation was particularly useful in probing links and preconceptions. In following chapters, however, the terms social class, and social class background was used in the vernacular as they were adequate to the purposes of each chapter.

A detailed SEG background was drawn up for each individual incorporating their mother, father, spouse/partner's occupations, where appropriate, in addition to their own adult occupations. Social mobility theorists (for instance; Hopper, 1981; Ingram, 2011; Reay, 2009;) often speak of the hidden capitals and status associated with social groups in the social strata and the difficulty inherent in moving through strata, where the mobile individual may gain an occupation but not the status associated with that occupation as he/she lacks the necessary capital to convert into status, such capital

coming from being an ascribed member of that social strata rather than achieving it through social mobility. This SEG background history was done in order to probe the extent to which the individual was exposed to other SEGs within their development, and thus exposed to those various capitals that are converted to social and personal status associated with membership of those SEGs. This chapter sought to look at education through a new lens by focusing on the level of education that the individual had attained before leaving the education system rather than the level of credential they had attained. This was done in an attempt to capture exposure, and the regard or lack of regard given, to education. When linking levels of education attainment to SEG of origin, there was a variety of SEGs recorded against each educational level through decades, with most SEG levels A and B being recorded at the highest attainment levels. However, it must be emphasised that these are very broad categories encompassing a wide variety of occupations, that although classified as employers, managers and higher professionals, vary greatly in levels of skill, education and associated status. Then the social mobility of the individual prior to entering university was explored in terms of educational attainment and their movement from SEG of origin to SEG as adult. This analysis led to consideration of other factors of interest such as the role of gender in perpetuating social norms and the importance of the early years of development, in particular the lasting effect of supportive/non supportive agents in the school system and family of origin.

Chapter six began by reviewing the decision making process that caused these individuals to deviate from their particular life trajectories and engage in education. Even though social and education policies facilitate the procedure of engaging in

education as a mature adult, it is not the normative trajectory of an adult to engage in education (with the exception of work related study), third level education has been normatively associated with follow on from secondary level. Therefore it is of benefit (particularly to policy planners) to be able to capture the influences that impact on the decision making process of adults in deciding to deviate from the parallel sequence of their own life trajectories and engage in tertiary education. However, it is very often small and seemingly inconsequential events that cause people to consider engaging in a degree course. The theorising of Bandura (2001, 2006) and Zajonc (2001) have been helpful in illuminating this process. Having established the events that caused people to consider attending college, attention turned to considering what they wanted to achieve as a result of coming to college, their aims in embarking on this voyage of discovery. To this end Hopper's concepts of goal formation and impeding or facilitating factors were of use in discerning the extent to which education played a part in helping the individual achieve these goals or the extent to which education played a part in changing those goals. Typologies were created as patterns of aspiration became evident. These typologies of orientation offer an alternative to the dominance of social background with respect to engaging in education as an adult. Hopper's theory was particularly useful in that it considered volition. Coming back to education as a mature adult is an act of will, even if it is facilitated by the State and the University and supported (hopefully) by family and friends. Hopper acknowledged the importance of acknowledging the presence of dissatisfaction with some level of the individual's life-trajectory even if minor. This chapter explored the critical events that acted as a springboard for change, and the various courses and agents that may have facilitated this. However, it is nevertheless important to understand why the

individual oriented themselves towards education as a vehicle of change. To this end, analysis of the data suggested four patterns of orientation: Strategists, Fulfilment Seekers, Transformationalists and Builders. In developing typologies each individual's early life was plotted in terms of arriving at an understanding as to why they orientated themselves towards education.

Having established why they wanted to come to college, this chapter turned to investigate how they engaged in the process. From a policy perspective, it is useful to know that most went down the mature access route, with some taking advantage of the opportunity to engage in preparation or bridging courses. This chapter also dealt with experiences within the college community. Group behaviour, in terms of accepting the "other" is governed by the often assumed rules and roles within that group and the level of status rigidity within that group. Conformity to the group determines the level of acceptance of the individual and their position within the core or periphery of that group, and of that group by other groups. Data analysis suggested that it was insufficient to consider the college group as an entity and that the individual perspective of choice was often a more important factor in group membership than suggested by group paradigms. To aid explanation, a group matrix was designed consisting of four possible group memberships: formal, supportive, semi formal and informal. This matrix enabled a clear examination of the concept of choice on the part of the individual, resultant from a prioritisation of both roles and levels of interest, and the concept of rigidity in terms of rules and censure and reward in terms of the formality of the group.

Chapter seven reviewed the post graduate experiences of this cohort in terms of the economic, personal and social returns of acquiring a degree. What comes forth in this section of the analysis are tensions as to the nature of education and the purpose of education. Education is regarded by some individuals as being something acquired on the route to an additional goal whilst others value education as a goal in itself. In exploring the economic returns for those who engaged in paid work following their degree programmes, there was a reluctance to name salaries, however for the most part people indicated a level of acceptance of their remuneration levels.

I compared the occupations of this cohort, pre and post their time at college in order to see whether individuals had "moved from one social stratum to another"(Hopper, 1981:3). Using SEG classifications there were seven individuals who retained their original classifications, two of whom did so due to retirement. Four experienced downward social mobility and thirteen experienced upward social mobility. Therefore 54% of the sample experienced upward social mobility. Of this thirteen, one (Ray) was employed in academia and four (Shiela, Maisie, Ned and Harry), were employed in the health service. Ray, Shiela and Maisie were permanent employees on a structured pay scale with associated benefits. Shiela was unhappy with the reductions in the rates of pay for nurses in the health service, but otherwise happy in her job, Ray and Maisie were both happy with the terms and conditions of their employment and with the autonomy offered in their respective positions. Ned had been unable to secure a position as a physiotherapist in Ireland and had been reluctant to travel abroad like many of his colleagues. Instead, he elected to engage in doctoral study in physiotherapy, and works part-time in private hospitals as a physiotherapist. Ned felt

that the payment for this was good, but the work sporadic at times, and dependent to an extent to your willingness to work at short notice, something that could be hard to factor in with life's other requirements. Harry was in a similar position, having debts from completing this, his second degree, he found limited work in his field of dentistry, and found that the costs associated with paying dental practices to allow him to work quite prohibitive. He thought that if he had stayed in his previous occupation (teaching) he would have tenure, and better pay and benefits than he now had or could anticipate having in his present career, and in addition that he would have been able to progress in his personal life. In his present circumstances he could not envisage being in a position to support a family or buy a house. Therefore, although he experienced upward social mobility in terms of his SEG classification, he did not gain the level of comfort that he aimed for when he re-engaged in education. Of the remaining eight individuals (Josie, Gareth, Daithi, Kevin, Seansher, Anthony, Tara and Tash) Gareth was the one whose aims most clearly matched his post college achievements. He had entered college with the intention of setting up a particular business and having more personal control of his personal life. The company he founded post college attendance allowed him to do so. Kevin, Seansher, Tara and Tash were all in fulltime employment, as all had mentioned to some extent the notion of employment as an aim, it could be said that education had facilitated the achievement of this aim. However Seansher, Tara and Tash all spoke of the usefulness of their prior experiences and/or prior contacts in being influential in their gaining their respective employments, suggesting that individual social backgrounds, rather than detracting from the progression of an individual moving into another social strata, have in fact facilitated this. That is not to say that they did not regard their education as a factor in

their employment merely that they regarded it as secondary to their contacts and/or prior experience. Of the remainder of the individuals who experienced upward social mobility, all three (Josie, Daithi and Anthony) had only been able to secure part-time work, despite increasing their educational credentials, Anthony to PhD level and Daithi acquiring three additional qualifications at Masters and diploma level. Anthony was employed as a tour guide, but it was sporadic, lacked autonomy and was poorly paid, Daithi was on a job-bridge programme[58] and was hoping that this might lead to employment. Therefore, casting a more discerning lens on these experiences suggests that the finding of apparent 54% of upward social mobility post college attendance, masks other factors such as poor pay, casual or zero hours contract work, or the status attached to the individuals' personal contacts and knowledge. These experiences seem to be in keeping with Hopper's definition of social mobility:

> A series of contingent experiences and interpersonal situations encountered as the individual moved from one social stratum to another. (Hopper, 1981:3)

In casting a lens on those four individuals (Rita, Marymau, Annie and Linda) who had experienced downward mobility, all were unemployed, one was retired (Marymau) but had hoped for some form of part-time or voluntary work. Annie was the only person who had not mentioned employment as an aim, however by the time she had completed her degree, this had become an aim. She had completed an additional Masters course in education and hoped to get employment in an adult education

[58] Job-bridge is a National internship scheme providing work placements for a six or ninth month period.

sphere. However she became disillusioned with the high volume of voluntary work and low volume of paid work available. Rita, Annie and Linda all pondered, to some extent, as to whether the college journey had been worth it, in terms of years of missed opportunity to work (Rita) or the suitability of the courses they had undertaken to equip them to engage in employment subsequently (Annie and Linda).

Of the seven (Martha, Mildred, Kate, Monamon, Ursula, Fianna and Greta) who exhibited no mobility, Martha and Mildred were retired, Ursula was employed part-time (through choice) as a GP, Greta was engaged in a different occupation within her SEG classification, Fianna was employed in a trade union, with greater autonomy but with lower pay than if she had remained in her State job. Kate had started a language teaching and translating business which she was hoping to build up to be a full time profitable business. Monamon was the only individual not to achieve her aim of proceeding on to study journalism, however this was due to ill health and she was happy with the alternative path she took as a children's writer. Overall those that experienced neither upward nor downward mobility were happy with the extent to which their original aims and any new goals that they had formulated whilst in college had been met.

Whilst the results would suggest that findings support the concept of hierarchical movement through strata, a more nuanced reading of the facts reveals patterns which suggest the functional explanation of social mobility is flawed as is the notion that an individual's origin necessarily impacts negatively on their progression through their lives. The 54% of participants experiencing upward social mobility included part-time,

and zero hour contracts, and thus this is a more accurate and salient reflection of the experience of social mobility for this cohort. Those that experienced downward mobility were the least happy with their post college experiences, and had least success in meeting their aims. Overall, those who experienced no social mobility were the most content with their employment following their education.

In terms of educational engagement, fifteen of the cohort engaged in additional academic study, three to PhD level, and the remainder to Masters or Diploma level. For Ursula, Harry, Kate and Gareth this would have been anticipated. It would have been considered the norm in the career paths for Ursula and Harry. Gareth had factored his Master's course into his life plan and Kate had needed to gain a TEFL qualification, in addition to her degree, to engage in her translation and training business. However, for the other eleven individuals, the goal setting of additional education engagement came about as a result of their engagement in their undergraduate degrees. Martha and Mildred chose to complete Masters Courses as a continuation of their retirement. The remaining nine did so in order to further enhance their employment prospects, this would not have been anticipated, when they initially engaged in their undergraduate degree courses. Therefore, from Hopper's (1981) perspective, part or all of the four aspects of goal orientation (aspiration, anticipation, normative expectation, and level of achievement) has changed. It could be that an anomogenic goal orientation had developed whereby if an original goal was employment, then factors that prevented the individual gaining the desired type and level of employment, may have caused the normative

expectation to continue to rise thus diminishing the value of the achieved goal of acquiring the degree.

The personal returns indicate a high degree of personal satisfaction in undertaking a degree level education at this stage in their lives, regardless of the economic returns or the occupational possibilities. As theorised by Hopper (1981) all had exhibited some level of dissatisfaction with their lived experience. This need not have been manifest as extreme negativity or dysfunction in their lives, many were quite happy, it need only be at a level to prompt the individual to being open to change should the chance of change occur. The satisfaction was in terms of knowledge and college experience and was transformative in the sense that it was seen as adding to the human repertoire of experience. It allowed them to view life, through different lens, brought deeper levels of enjoyment to personal interests and opened up new roles for them in their social milieu. This was particularly evident in the social milieu where those who were engaged in their communities were able to bring an added dimension to their work. They now had "college knowledge" and in addition to the value of this subjectively, they also felt that they were taken more seriously by those with whom they were dealing. Overall, there was a sense that the primary value of the education was in the manner in which it accommodated social fluidity in terms of the self and the social sphere.

Succinctly, the findings of the thesis suggest that the participants had some level of regard for education throughout their lives, regardless of their social background, the support they received from their family, teachers or peers, or their belief in

themselves. There is evidence that formal education may not have been valued in some homes, but informal education, for instance a fondness for reading by parent(s) even if this did not extend to reading to a child, encouragement to use libraries, political awareness of a parent, contributed to creating in the participant an appreciation for knowledge and learning. Individuals did not have to be confident, indeed some were nervous and ill at ease (Shiela, Linda, Anthony), but nevertheless kept turning up day after day, until they got a little more comfortable with their degree courses and with studying in Trinity.

Tenacity therefore was a useful trait that overrode nervousness, in translating an aim into action, and enabling an individual to remain in higher education. The fact that policy facilitated these mature individuals in participating in education was very important. It enabled some of them to realise unrequited ambition, venture down unimagined pathways or re-orient themselves in their careers. Therefore, venturing through higher education as a mature student required both individual intent and structural facilitation, in other words a dynamic relationship between structure and agency.

10.3 Contributions of this study.

10.3.1 The concept of social mobility is flawed in terms of associating social class with education and a consequence of income level and status, and a conceptualisation of social fluidity offers a better fit.

Hopper's theory of social mobility was useful in framing this research study and explaining social patterns of normative behaviour in terms of parallel sequencing of life-cycle and life trajectories. His concept of insatiability in terms of breaking this sequence is particularly useful in attempting to make sense of the reason an individual would seek change in their lives, regardless of whether that life is manifest by happiness or unhappiness. Fig 3.1 (conceptual chapter) denoted the properties of social mobility (unit, timespan, direction, hierarchy, speed and distance) and the factors feeding into each of these properties. From this we can denote that status and class/economic position only feed into two properties- hierarchy and distance: Hierarchy being the congruence between the status and economic position/social class, and distance being the difference between origin and adult positions. His theory of properties, as stands, guided the development of the initial planning of the research.

The unit under examination was the individual mature student. Incorporating timespan in terms of inter/intra generational mobility usually forms an important measurement in policy documents and census surveys. A pure measurement should compare the adult against his/her parent in terms of activity at a certain age. However, I would argue that this is of limited use for several reasons, for example, the

value of an occupation even only in terms of percentage engaged in this occupation; if one's father had been a manager at a time when there were few managers, then his position most likely would have resulted in pay and status differentials with other staff, more so than if there were more individuals per capita at that level as may be the situation in the present day (Blandon, 2008). Furthermore, it provides only for comparison with one parent, and thus ignores the potential of the other parent, in terms of the capitals associated with their occupation and history. These limitations prompted an initial task in this research of charting the occupations of mother, father and spouse/partner, where appropriate, in order to chart the potential influence of additional social, cultural and/or economic capital that could contribute to explaining why the individual was open to the possibility of engaging in education as an adult.

The second property of particular interest was that of distance (origin - adult positions) = possible difference (status & class/economic positions). The sample used in this research ranged in age from early twenties to late seventies. Therefore childhood, early adulthood in the family of origin incorporated over five decades, with different social and cultural norms permeating these decades. My interest stemmed from an attempt to understand why adults choose education as a way of effecting change in their lives. I had already determined that focus on one parent in measuring intergenerational change was inadequate as it did not take into account the potential influence of the other parent and was thus not captured in measurement. My thought process in respect to distance, therefore, was that it was of more use to capture the movement of the adult through their adult working positions prior to pursuing their

degrees and post that experience. This should contribute feedback on the efficacy of policy in terms of outcome of gaining a university degree as a mature adult.

This then led to a consideration of the property: hierarchy. This seems to be the kernel of social mobility for many theorists with the preponderance of deliberation on whether, or to what extent, it is possible, to enjoy the occupational benefits resultant from a particular level of education, if you do not have the benefit of the normative associated upbringing with such an education which would confer on you associated cultural and social capital that facilitate cultural and social status. Both these properties prompted further exploration of these taken for granted concepts of occupation being associated with economic reward and social class(SEG) and indeed the notion of status being associated with attending this particular institution, Trinity College.

At this stage, in the analysis of the data, an SEG table of origin was detailed which captured the variety of SEG backgrounds the mature individual had been exposed to in terms of family of origin and spouse/partner. This contextualised the unit (the participant), distance (history of occupations of parents, partners and self) and hierarchy (associated SEG ranking) of occupations. This indicated that most individuals' parents came from similar social backgrounds. Therefore, with regard to the somewhat reductionist three way relationship between social origin- education – occupation& status, there would not, for these participants, have been exposure to an alternative three way relationship associating education with higher occupation and status, within the family of origin.

Where, therefore did the interest in education come from? The life history approach, described in chapter four, has proved particularly salient in seeking answers to this question. As detailed in chapter four, life histories are particularly useful in gaining an holistic appreciation of the lived experience, the individual life needs to be explored in conjunction with an understanding of how that life was shaped (Plummer, 2000; Johnston & Merrill 2004, for instance). In this thesis the life history approach adopted in the interviewing process, got "behind the scenes" as it were, and was useful in identifying the occasions and manifestations of interest in education within the family of origin which were not evident in charting social mobility in terms of inter and intra generational mobility based on occupation. These were often informal experiences, in terms of the importance attached to reading, discussion and/or politics in a family. Other experiences emphasised the importance of education in its formal setting, with encouragement to apply oneself at school even if continuing in education was not considered possible. The latter indicates a valuing of formal knowledge, even if considered bounded by social structure of a particular era or milieu. The former evidences a valuing of informal knowledge and its contribution to education, which often is overlooked with a focus on formal qualifications and their relationship to increasing credentialisation. The data analysis suggested that, in addition to formal knowledge, informal knowledge was an important determinant of change and one that should be included in a model of social mobility.

Having explored the determinants of social mobility, attention turned to the variables that effect mobility in terms of the eco system within which it is nested. Hopper's

(1981) approach is useful in that he considers this from both a structural and experiential perspective. In the time period (1970s) that Hopper et al.'s(1975) respective studies were conducted, route was, and remains, an effective streaming tool of individuals from a very young age through the school system (Clancy,2001;Egerton, 2001; Reay et al., 2009) . "Each route is designed to cater for a category of students who are usually demarcated from others according to the prevailing criteria of ability and ambition" (Hopper et al., 1975:18). In the UK (according to Hopper, 1981) this included for example; secondary moderns, grammar, independent, secondary technical and comprehensive schools, with some people leaving the educational system after elementary schooling. Each route is associated with particular segments of the labour market, requiring particular levels of education and the young person prepared accordingly. Within the Irish domain, primary and secondary education is provided in both state and private institutions. However, a dominant feature of education discourse in this domain, is concerned with postcodes, and the charge that those living in disadvantaged areas, are less likely to have the resources within their schools to continue in education, thus, unable to engage in higher education, are caught in a cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity (Clancy, 2001; Fleming, 2013). Consequently those from middle class backgrounds and above are over represented in the demographics of third level attendance.

Fresh insight into the notion of routes might be gained from specific consideration of adult students. In this study, there was representation from a wide array of social backgrounds (detailed in chapter five) and all the participants had completed their formative education, some having completed a primary degree already, whereas

others had very limited secondary education. Regardless of their various levels of education, they were all successful in completing their degree programmes. This suggests that reconsideration of "route" would be worthwhile, beyond that of type of schooling received and the extent to which this is co-joined with social background and school experiences.

The experiential perspective in Hopper's ecosystem of social mobility, suggests how the individual experiences social mobility in terms of preparation for a career, acquisition of skills, etiquette and modes of behaviour, the extent to which particular careers can be normatively expected, and the degree of status rigidity that can be experienced by the individual in terms of lifestyle, levels of acceptance and distance. The data analysis suggests that this is a view of education through too narrow a lens, with many placing a value on education itself as a goal, with some gaining occupations based less on their credentials and more on their social networks. With regard to occupation, the findings are somewhat at odds with other research in the field (described in chapter two) which has found that middle class graduates have the necessary capital and access to particular social networks that enable them to gain better jobs in their professional spheres than their working class counterparts, who indeed may struggle through their time in college as a result of having to straggle "two social words" (Brennan, 2002; Hansen, 2001; Jetten et al., 2008; Keane, 2011; Reay et al., 2002). Some of the participants in this study owed their (degree appropriate) employment to their social contacts that they had made prior to entering college. Their experiences of this are discussed in detail in chapter nine.

Therefore, the data analysis suggests that there is no "wrong type" of social capital, that one's own social network, (regardless of social class position) can advantage an individual more so than disadvantage them, that the lack of positive role models, risk aversion in their families, lack of familial ambition, when taken in the context of a lifespan, do not necessarily serve as barriers to social mobility. Individuals are more likely to be able to engage in social mobility, more so as a feature of a fluid society rather than an hierarchical one in terms of personal aptitude, intelligence, ability and effort (Heath & Payne, 1999). It may be helpful to reconsider social mobility as akin to physical mobility with all the variety of incentive, choice and restraint that physical mobility enjoys. Social mobility requires travelling along routes, from a starting position to an end position, perhaps having a choice (though this may be constrained choice) of different routes and experiences whilst getting from A to B. Physical mobility is limited by structure, the walls, roads and bridges of geography, so too is social mobility by the structures of state and institutional facilitation, by the landscape of possibility, these forming the boundaries to the location of the journey. As with physical mobility, the people that you meet along the way may help or hinder you, however, the extent to which you, as an adult, want to continue the journey is mediated to a large degree by your own motivation. Therefore it is suggested that social mobility would be redefined as "movement or opportunities for movement along different pathways facilitated by personal endeavours and structural provision."

Overall the experiences of this cohort have led to a redefining of social mobility away from the notion of hierarchical mobility as: a) the status of occupations change rapidly, driven by technological advances and global imperatives, b) the nature of employment

changes with a growth in part-time and unsecured work, c) part-time and unsecured work has prompted individual additional investment in education to the extent that labour has and continues to become increasing credentialised, d) occupation flux has led to the demand or assumption of higher qualifications for lower levels of labour, e) education is valued in itself and f) individuals do not see themselves as lacking in the social and cultural capital, the ascribed capitals associated with particular occupations, resultant from their social backgrounds. Rather they view education as an additive factor which layers on to the self rather than the self detracting from potential.

10.3.2 The mal/adaptive influence of family and/or institutional agents has far reaching effects on the lifelong educational trajectories of individuals, regardless of era or social class background.

The charge has been made (Fleming, 2013; Finnegan, 2008; Grummell, 2007; Lynch, 2006) that a neoliberal dogma dominates policy direction and legislative provision. This then shifts the responsibility on to the individual to perform and away from the State to provide. It pays little or no cognisance to the social and structural barriers that have been discussed in this thesis. Whilst neoliberalism may set the political agenda, social identity and social categorisation paradigms speak of the innate human need to categorise and to belong. In all species there are power relationships, more so in human relationships because the human infant is born completely helpless. From the first moment in life the infant is in a power relationship. The parent has all the power at the start, imparting knowledge, inculcating social and cultural values, gradually ceding to the child with passing years. Eventually the child leaves home and

the power relationship levels out, and the child becomes an adult. As an adult he either continues to exhibit, or rejects (wholly or partially) the social and cultural values that were part of his upbringing, and absorbs (wholly or partially) the additional social and cultural values that form his adult milieu. Gradually the parent child relationship changes again, the parent becoming infirm and the child assuming a more powerful role. This, admittedly simplistic explanation, is offered to highlight the passing of time and the changing face of power and to suggest that a consequence of the existence of power is the existence of inequality. Therefore inequality is not a construct, but a fact. The human propensity for social categorisation perpetuates that fact. However, that is not to say that inequality is static and should be accepted as inevitable, rather like the parent-child relationship it needs to be subject to challenge and change. All cultures and societies within the human species grow from the parent child dyadic relationship, and as such all experience the dynamism of power struggle and changed power ratios to grow and survive.

In chapter five, cognisance was paid both to both structure and agency, in terms of the impact of the family (their social and cultural mores) and the growing child. The data analysis was interrogated, leading to evidence of common experiences regardless of gender, social class or era. If a child, during their developing years, experienced particular types of behaviour, in relation to their education, from parent(s), teacher(s) or peer(s), this could have a long lasting negative effect on their ability to believe in their educational ability and to flourish. This was a somewhat unexpected finding, and has resulted in a tentative model build which demonstrates the determinants that decouple the parallel progression of an individual's educational trajectory. In this

thesis, this model demonstrates that negative influences could not only derail the individual's educational progression (regardless of social expectation) but also (in some instances, for example, Maisie, Anthony and Shiela) have far reaching effects on confidence levels, regardless of their achievements in life. It is suggested that further research would need to be done in this area to test the efficacy of this model, however this approach would offer an additional insight to social mobility, by looking at commonalities that inhibit progression in education across SEG, era, and gender rather than focusing on differences attributed to social background.

10.3.3 In/out- group experience of colligate belonging can be reinterpreted through individual choice rather than group mores.

This thesis has attempted to explore the relationship that the mature individual has with education not only in their "growing up" years, but also in terms of their time in the academy. Status effects have been offered as reason for the lack of success of those from one social milieu attempting to gain acceptance and success within another milieu[59]. Status is associated with power (Hopper, 1981; Bourdieu et al., 1977; Karabel 2006), the social and cultural status inherent in the habits, manners and mores of an individual situate them within a social milieu. However, this does not appear to have been a problem for the participants in this study. Some, for example, Tara spoke of being conscious of having a different accent, and Tash spoke of a lecturer thinking it unusual for someone from a working class background to be attending Trinity. However, neither of these women felt that they didn't belong in Trinity, or feel that

[59] Refer to seminal studies in chapter two.

they did not engage in the process of going to university. Research studies (Hopper, 1981; Reay, 2009) explain this by reference to the effort the individual had to make to get into college, and so is employing heuristics to regard the experience as worth that effort, regardless of social difference, and the regard that the individual is held in for having been accepted into a high status institution by his family and friends. However, these explanations did not fit well with the analysis of the narratives in this study. Some participants (for example Linda) felt that their family or friends might have resented the fact that they went to Trinity more so than that they went to college. Whilst all felt that they had worked hard to get into college, many of them had crises of confidence (for example Kate) and took longer than four years to complete their degrees.

At this point it is worth reiterating that this thesis was based on the experiences of mature students, that is anyone over the age of 23, who gained access to Trinity to study on a degree programme, not solely mature students who came from a working class background. Therefore these participants (coming from different social backgrounds, of different ages and both genders) were exhibiting commonalities in their experiences and reactions to experiences. Recalling one of Hopper's (1981) core principles, that individuals must experience some type of insatiability in order to effect change in their lives, and examining the narratives of these participants, suggested that to continue the focus on the individual participation or lack of participation in their environment could yield interesting data. Informed by the interviews and a theoretical understanding of group behaviour (as detailed in chapter three) the analysis led to the creation of a four part group grid. This grid has divided the college

community into four groups (formal, supportive, semi formal, and informal). The individual's experience in college, therefore, can be explored with respect to their intention to engage and experience of engaging in any of these groups. Chapter seven and chapter nine offer detailed explanation of this. Findings suggest that there were different levels of comfort in terms of their personal, social and educational status and the status of the academy but ultimately these participants arrived at a comfort level with which they could live, without sacrificing aspects of self.

It is suggested that use of the college grid informs the theoretical field of group behaviour, and the field of mature studentship within third level. By deconstructing the college community from one entity into parts (groups), cognisance is paid to group dynamics in terms of structure, and in/formal rules, which facilitates a detailed exploration into the individual's choice in participation in any of these groups. This then leads to consideration of the degree of freedom the individual has in making these choices and the factors that influence such choice, for instance family duties may impede membership of social societies for some parents, but not for others, some may choose to engage with the pastoral services, whilst others, with similar problems may not. It is suggested that use of the college grid offers an alternative lens through which to view experiences of mature students, and that the grid could be of use in exploring the experiences of other minority populations within the college community.

10.3.4 The social class standing of mature individuals following a graduate education may disimprove.

Engaging in higher education has been proffered as a means to increasing an individual's social mobility (OECD,2004; Hunt, 2010) . This being the case, one might expect to have changed social class as a result of gaining employment upon earning a degree. In the case of these participants 54% of the sample experienced upward social mobility. This is discussed in detail in chapter nine, together with reflection on those who experienced downward (30%) or no (16%) social mobility. Many studies have argued that mature students may have limited success in employment due perhaps to factors of age (Fleming et al., 2009; Staunton, 2008) or due to certain occupations being considered a young man's game (Egerton, 2000; Purcell et al., (2007) or due to their own SEG (Hansen, 2001;Keane, 2011). This thesis has highlighted different aspects of employment, namely that even though the findings suggest that a policy focus on achieving social mobility through education would appear to have been successful for the majority of this cohort, nevertheless it masks the fact that a feature of some of these occupations was poor pay and/ conditions, casual or zero hours contract work, or that the employment resulted from previous personal social networks rather than the usual graduate channels or professional networks. This raises the following questions: What constitutes successful employment? To what extent are social class ranking or SEG ranking indicating the normal pay, conditions and benefits now associated with a wide range of occupations? What effect will this have on the associated traditional status of particular occupations?

10.3.5 Additional credentialisation may result as part of a new foci, but may be resultant from sunk costs rather than subject interest or occupational advancement.

The status of occupations is in flux and ever-changing, those jobs that were deemed desirable years ago are not deemed so now. In addition, even if a job may have retained its status, the terms, conditions, benefits and financial rewards may be a lot less satisfactory and enticing. Consequently the status of holding such a job is less than it was and as a consequence status of the social background of the individual may be less of an issue. However, education appears to be filling the status gaps in terms of needing more credentials to do less.

Analysis of the data indicated that of the fifteen participants who continued in education, only four had intended to do so, at the start of their undergraduate study. This is explored in chapter nine, however, it is worth highlighting that of the remainder, five participants felt it was necessary to continue in education in the hope of gaining employment. Therefore 33% of those continuing in education were doing so, not because they wanted to advance in their field of expertise, but in the hope of gaining employment that was not forthcoming as a result of having gained degree level education. The most extreme example was one participant who since finishing his degree had also completed three additional diploma and master level courses and was now on a Jobbridge scheme, fervently hoping that it would result in gaining an occupation that promised more than a few hours of part time work. However, as aptly noted by by Hirsch (1977:43) "if everyone stands on tiptoe no one sees better."

10.3.6 Policy has successfully facilitated mature students in returning to education.

In this instance, the word "successful" is being used in narrow terms, in the manner in which policies in place to encourage mature studentship (described in chapter two) have facilitated this cohort in returning to education and successfully completing their degree programmes.

In terms of facilitations, there were five incentives mentioned as being of paramount importance in coming to college; the mature access route, the nursing professional development course, community back to education and university preparation courses, the back to education allowance and the "free fees" scheme.

Twenty two of the twenty four participants applied for their college course through the mature access route, including those with previous degrees. One participant elected to repeat her Leaving Certificate (twice) rather than apply through the mature access route as she had heard some "horror stories" regarding the mature interview process. Another participant entered through the professional nursing development course and was very grateful that this pathway had been developed as it allowed him to continue to earn a wage whilst studying and gaining professional qualifications. The availability of the general access route was one that the other members of the cohort expressed gratitude for. There was also overall appreciation expressed for the provision of college preparation courses (eleven participated), both from those who availed of them without charge and those who paid a fee to engage in them. Most felt that they offered excellent advice in terms of academic preparation and confidence building.

Eight of the participants benefited from a back to education allowance. However none of them referred to this as being vital to their engagement in education, with some of them not being inclined to speak of this at all. This was somewhat puzzling as all were vocal and supportive of the "free fees" scheme. There could be many explanations for this reticence; some (Seansher, for instance) had been on some form of social benefit for many years and regarded this allowance as a similar form of subsistence, others had worked frequently and viewed this similarly to a wage and were reluctant to discuss money and identify source of payment (Linda, for example), others like Gareth, felt that they had been lucky to get it, but it was not so large an allowance that it would have made much difference to their attending college or not. However, there was a much more animated response to the subject of "free fees."

20 of 24 were able to avail of the "free fees" provision. Of these twenty, only two (Josie and Tara) were certain that they would have paid fees to return to education. Neither would have been in a position to pay tuition fees at this stage in their lives, citing the needs of their children, and family, as coming first. However both felt that education was a right, Tara emphasising that it was not a privilege of the young. Both claimed that they would have borrowed if necessary to pay for their own college fees in the future. Therefore 18/20 who availed of free fees said that they would not necessarily have been able to engage in education if they had been required to pay fees. Of these 18, 11(Kate, Maisie, Josie, Tara, Ray, Tash, Greta, Seansher, Fianna, Daithi, Shiela), believed that, either they needed the skills that they acquired through their college education to have gained their post college employment or needed the qualification to get their salary level in their present employment, even if that employment was poorly paid .

Overall, therefore, it can be concluded that student supports, access routes and free tuition fees (for the majority of this cohort) were vital components without which they would have been unable to access, engage and benefit from Higher Education.

10.4 Limitations of this study

The study was set in one institution, Trinity College Dublin, in an effort to reduce the influence of variables such as institutional ethos, spatial location, and reputation. As such it can make no claims to generalisability.

Hopper's theory was designed for use in a large scale mixed methods study which sought to measure anxiety levels in individuals pursuing education as adults. That was not the aim of this study. This study sought to explore an adult's relationship with education and in this context Hopper's concept of social mobility was used as a guiding framework. The sample used in this study was small (N=24), which was a problem noted by Hopper et al., (1975) with regard to some of their samples and subsamples. However, I would echo their findings that, although inferences to larger populations must carry a caution, the data analysis resultant from a small scale study can reveal deeply contextualised patterns which add greatly to the study of individual behaviour and cultural context. Hopper's theory of social mobility developed through the period 1965-1981, was designed to test the mobility of adults within a cultural context of a background of highly stratified second level school routes and the degree to which the mobility process induced anxiety. It could be argued that a limitation of this thesis is that it did not attempt to measure anxiety or to measure the presence/ absence of

other attitudes. However, the argument of this thesis is that Hopper's theory can justifiably be applied to the current era and cross-culturally, in essence because it pays cognisance to the intersections of individual behaviour with social and cultural contexts, viewing all as dynamic and particularly because of his exploration of the concept of insatiability. The theory is detailed enough for a researcher to take aspects or determinants of same for rigorous and in-depth probing without sacrificing the broad theoretical paradigm.

The sample used in this study were adults who have successfully completed a degree level education at Trinity College Dublin, as it was an aim of this study to explore post degree destinations. However this should not lead to the suggestion that the experiences of those who did not complete their degrees are of less value than those who managed to do so. This is not the case; indeed it is vital that those experiences are explored in order to add to the knowledge base as to what would have been necessary to facilitate continuing engagement in the academy.

10.5 Chapter Summary

There are many seminal studies which highlight the lack of social heterogeneity in third level education, with respect to inclusion and participation from lower socio economic groups (Fleming et al., 2009; HEA, 2010; Lynch et al., 2012). Research tends to adopt a deficit approach in identifying the failure of Higher Education or indeed education in general, addressing diverse needs or problematising social background in terms of lack

of readiness or preparedness to engage in education. These seminal studies cast a necessary lens on the structural impediments experienced by swathes of the population in terms of education and opportunity. This research study had a different purpose. It sought to answer one simple question: Why do adults engage in education to effect change in their lives? There are many theoretical propositions that endeavour successfully to provide explanation for such behaviour, including but not limited to, human capital theory, transformative theory, risk management theory, and social mobility theory. For this thesis, Hopper's (1981) approach provided the first step in answering that question, namely a sense of insatiability. His structured approach helped in directing the study towards examining additive and subtractive elements experienced in the pursuit of education. His concept of social mobility was useful in providing a framework for the development of the research, and was reflective of the emphasis within social policy.

This chapter has offered an overview of the thesis findings and following on, considered the relevance of Hopper's concept of social mobility in the present day. Overall, the research suggests the association of formal education dis/advantage with the concept of social mobility as hierarchical movement is flawed. This is informed by social change and personal intent. The social change is informed principally by two factors, firstly the world of work has changed, and fulltime permanent jobs with a prescribed career structure are less evident in the occupational landscape, together with the birth of new occupations and the demise of others. Secondly personal intent informs on a broader purpose of education, in lieu of or in addition to employment, that of intrinsic satisfaction.

This thesis is brought to a close by recalling once again the metaphor of physical mobility in redefining social mobility, following on from this, the main findings are listed for reflection.

Physical mobility can be interpreted as movement of an individual from point A to point B constrained by the choices available to them along the way. Some individuals start off the journey better equipped than others. Some meet physical obstacles on the way, road blocks, diversions, impenetrable walls and have to detour. Some take a scenic route and enjoy the journey, others strive to get to their destination quickly. What is not assumed in physical mobility is that every journey has to involve scaling mountains or plummeting down to the depths of valleys, it is enough to accept that a journey is in progress. So too for social mobility: a journey that begins, might include obstacles that are surmountable or insurmountable, might involve deviations or might veer off to a new destination, but ultimately one that involves movement along original or deviated pathways

This study offers the following contributions:

1) The concept of social mobility is flawed in terms of associating social class with education and a consequence of income level and status, and a conceptualisation of social fluidity offers a better fit.
2) The mal/adaptive influence of family and/or institutional agents has far reaching effects on the lifelong educational trajectories of individuals, regardless of era or social background.

3) In/out-group experience of colligate belonging can be reinterpreted through individual choice rather than group mores.
4) The social class standing of mature individuals following a graduate education may disimprove.
5) Additional credentialisation may result as part of a new foci, but may be resultant from sunk costs rather than subject interest or occupational advancement.
6) Policy has successfully facilitated mature students in returning to education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Invitation to participate in focus group.

I have been sponsored by the Irish Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences to conduct research into postgraduate experiences of people who returned to education as mature students. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evelyn Mahon of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin.

I would like to invite you to participate in one of a series of focus group sessions that will be held during April in Trinity College Dublin 2. Light refreshments will be served. I want to capture the breadth of experiences (positive and negative) of mature graduates across the faculties. I am interested in why you decided to go to college at that stage in your life, what you hoped to gain from holding a degree and to what extent you believe it has impacted on your life since. This session will be recorded for analysis purposes; however your responses will be kept anonymous.

Your unique insight would make a valuable contribution both to this study and to the field of adult education. If you would like to participate in one of these sessions please contact me with an expression of interest. My contact details are listed below.
Kind regards,

Michele Giblin,
IRCHSS Scholar,
School of Social Work and Social Policy,
Trinity College Dublin.
Phone Number: Office 01 8963790
Email: mgiblin@tcd.ie

Appendix 2 Focus Group Consent Forms

My name is Michele Giblin. I have been sponsored by the Irish Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences to conduct research into postgraduate experiences of people who returned to education as mature students. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evelyn Mahon of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin.

Please find attached a participation information sheet which will give you details of my proposed research on mature students and their experiences after college. I hope that you will agree to participate.

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. The data obtained will be used for research purposes in pursuit of a PhD at Trinity College Dublin. Material obtained may appear in the dissertation, in conference presentations, in papers submitted to academic journals and/or in other media. This session will be recorded for analysis purposes; however your responses will be kept anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. This does not interfere with your rights under the Freedom of Information Act 1977 (amended 2003).

If you would like to ask any questions about this research you may do so at any stage by contacting me at: mgiblin@tcd.ie

Michele Giblin
IRCHSS Scholar
School of Social Policy
Trinity College Dublin
Email: mgiblin@tcd.ie

By signing this consent form you are agreeing to take part in this study.
I have read and understood the above and agree to participate.

Signature..... Name in block capitals.....

Appendix 3 Focus Group Participant Information Sheet

Dear former mature student,

I have been sponsored by the Irish Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences to conduct research into postgraduate experiences of people who returned to education as mature students. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evelyn Mahon of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. The data obtained will be used for research purposes in pursuit of a PhD at Trinity College Dublin.

I would like to know what your life is like now, whether you think your college experience has made it better, or indeed had any effect on it at all. For instance would you choose the same course again? What return do you feel that you got from the course economically, socially and personally? I am particularly interested in your experiences after college and whether you feel that your age, for instance, impacted in any way on your employment potential.

By participating in this focus group you are making a valuable contribution to this study. This research will add greatly to the knowledge base available to policy makers, in coming from mature students who have gone through the system and had some years of post graduate experience. I would like to remind you that this session will be recorded for analysis purposes; however your responses will be kept anonymous. Material obtained may appear in the dissertation, in conference presentations, in papers submitted to academic journals and/or in other media. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. This does not interfere with your rights under the Freedom of Information Act 1977 (amended 2003).

If you have any questions about this research or indeed if you would like to participate in further stages, please contact me at: mgiblin@tcd.ie

Michele Giblin,
IRCHSS Scholar,
School of Social Work and Social Policy,
Trinity College Dublin.

Appendix 4 Topic Guide for Focus Groups

(Full selection of possible prompts should the need arise to encourage conversation)

BACKGROUND

Hello, thank you for coming. It's really great to have the people that the study is about set the tone so to speak and before we get started I'd just like to go through a few things with you. I have consent forms here that I would like you to sign before we start so that I know you are comfortable with everything and can answer any questions that you may have. I'll just read it out quickly to you before we start. I am also giving you a participation information sheet. It has much the same information on it but it is yours to keep whereas I will keep the consent forms. Audrey is co-ordinating this meeting with me and understands that everything said in this room is confidential.

Read.

There is just one more thing before we introduce ourselves there is a short exercise that I would like to begin with. In front of you are three squares of paper. Each is marked 1st, 2nd or 3rd. I would like you now to think for a moment about the time before you went to college. Could you think of what were the three main reasons that you went to college? Mind you, not what has happened but what you were hoping would happen when you began the journey in college. I'd like you to do this by yourself, without chatting with anyone, just think about that for a minute and write them down in order of preference.

Thanks, Audrey will collect them now. Audrey is co-moderator this evening.

For those that don't know me, my name is Michele Giblin. I was a mature student myself here at Trinity College and I graduated in 2008. I studied Psychology and Sociology majoring in Psychology. Once I had graduated I got to wondering what happened to us, all us mature graduates after college was over. Aside from whatever hopes or aspirations we may or may not have in attending third level, there are phenomenal policy programmes at global, European and national level in promoting lifelong learning. What this has meant in an Irish perspective at least since 1996 is funding being provided to facilitate access to those who would not have had opportunities to go (for various reasons) at an earlier stage in life and there are other access categories also. Part of the reason for this funding is the knowledge that the present work force would not have the skill sets necessary for future economic needs and also that the age profile within Europe is rising. Therefore there was a need to 'upskill or educate older people. Now some of you here got your degrees some time ago and others have got them more recently.

At this stage I would like to ask each of you to introduce yourselves, tell us when and where you did your undergraduate degree course, why you did decide to go for it at that particular stage and what I'd you expect to get out of it? And whether if you had your time all over again you would do the same course?

When this is over, Audrey should have written up the reasons from the first exercise.

AFTER/SINCE/NOW

List exercise: on the sheets of paper in front of you could you list up to four things that have happened to you since you have finished your undergraduate degree, they can be positive things or negative things. For instance; got a job, didn't get a job, felt more confident, didn't feel more confident.

WHILST AUDREY MAKES A GENERAL NOTE ON THE FLIP CHART OF WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING WE WILL JUST GO AROUND THE TABLE AND INTRODUCE OURSELVES AND SAY WHY WE WENT TO UNI AS MATURE GRADUATES IN THE FIRST PLACE, WHEN IT WAS, WHY WE CHOSE THE COURSE AND PERHAPS WHETHER WE WOULD DO THE SAME ONE AGAIN?

Thoughts

Have your hopes and expectations changed since doing the degree?
Has this degree changed your life substantially?
Do you think your life would be different if you did not have a degree?
Have you exceeded your expectations?
If you could change anything about your present circumstances what would you change?
How do you think it has changed you?
Do you think it has changed you?
Overall what is the single most important thing you got out of doing the degree?
What do you expect from yourself now?
What did you expect from yourself then?
How do you think that could be achieved?
How do you think that could happen?
How could you make it happen?
How relevant do you think your degree was to your present circumstances?
Do you think it changed your life substantially?
Aside from work is there anything that you would do differently now that you think might be as a result of going to college?
Would like to make a list of some of the experiences you had after graduating?
If there was a downside to getting a degree what do you think it was?
If you had a wish list and could do it all over again what would you change?
Would you say it was hard to get a degree?

What did you imagine it would be like after?
Are there any other things that you would do differently?
Would you say it changed things a lot or at all with your other friends?

Finance
Can you talk about whether you feel you benefited financially from this?
Did you expect to benefit financially?
Could you talk about your salary expectations?
Were they as good, worse, better than you expected as a result of having a degree?
Do you think that the economic returns were as good as you would have expected?
Would you have gone up a pay grade do you think?
Focusing on finance as the moment, do you feel that they were good enough to have warranted doing a degree?

Jobs
What sort of jobs have you had since graduating? Include voluntary jobs in this.
What would you consider to be an appropriate graduate job?
If you were going for a job now what expectations would you have?
Do you think there are any differences in the way you are treated when you go for a job? (me-only if clarity necessary-as a degree holder, age, gender)
If when you go for a job what do you think factors in to the equation when they are considering you for the job?
Could we just make a list of some of the jobs that you might have had since leaving college? And we will include voluntary jobs so what we will say I think is what the job was, was it in the private or public section and whether it was paid or not paid. So I have been a cleaner since I left college, and a painter, I have been a researcher and a volunteer. Someone I knew had a house that they needed to get sorted after tenants had left, so I said I would take it on and get it sorted out. I did it myself and was paid for it. I also worked on a help line in a voluntary capacity. Both jobs were temporary and one in the public sector and one in the private sector.
If we look at the chart in a minute we will see what it is you wanted? Just to ask you now to do the second exercise and write down what you did/ what happened after you got your undergraduate degree? For instance did if we could write down some of the options we took?
(Or one of the following) I am interested in your employment experiences?

What sort of responsibility do you think employers have when it comes to employing you/mature graduates?
What sort of job did you have before going to college?
Do you consider that you need a degree to get a job now?
How has having a degree changed anything when you are going for a job?
Would you apply for a job in the private or public sector?
What would influence you?
Do you feel that having a degree puts you on an even footing with young graduates when looking for a job?
What happens now (bearing in mind the recession) when you go for a job when compared to pre degree times?
Do you feel that your job is relevant to the degree?
What would you consider a job relevant degree?
How do you feel you would have been judged in a job beforehand??
Did any of you take part in milk rounds?
Was the career service instrumental in your career?
Volunteering?
Could we just make a list of some of the jobs that you might have had since leaving college? And we will include voluntary jobs so what we will say I think is what the job was, was it in the private or public section and whether it was paid or not paid. So I have been a cleaner since I left college, and a painter, I have been a researcher and a volunteer. Someone I knew had a house that they needed to get sorted after tenants had left, so I said I would take it on and get it sorted out. I did it myself and was paid for it. I also worked on a help line in a voluntary capacity. Both jobs were temporary and one in the public sector and one in the private sector.

Age/gender
Can you give me examples of when your age was not a factor in getting a job?
Can you give me examples of when your gender was not a factor in getting a job?
How do you feel about your age when you are going for a job?
Could you give me examples of when your age might have been a plus or in fact a minus when getting a

Further education
For those who went on to do other courses what did you choose and why?
What made you do another course?

Why did you choose this one?
What did you get as a result of doing the course?

Life after college?
Do you have any friends since then?
How did the differences disappear?
Looking back to college and (if they have said that it was initially hard) and the way you feel about the blending with younger students how would you expect to blend in with younger workers in the workforce, if you were applying for a job?
Family and friends now
Can you speak a bit about how your family and friends feel about you getting a degree?
How has it affected your relationship with your family/other half if in a relationship?

Expectations
When I ask people what they hoped to get out of this they usually say three things:
Hope for a better job
More confidence
Self improvement would you agree with these would anyone stand out?
Would you have experienced any negative emotions that you would not have expected?
What would be the best scenario for you of life after college?

<u>Then and now</u>
Do you feel there would be any difference in the way you would have been judged in a job then and now?
Aside from a degree what other factors do you feel aid in the job market when you are considered or accepted for a job?
Is there anything that you do now that you wouldn't do before because you had not got a degree?
With your family
At work
With friends
In your approach
Would you have experienced hardship then in college and now?
Would you have been expecting to experience them then....now?

Could you elaborate?

BEFORE

Reasons

Were there things you couldn't do because you did not have a degree?
What lead you to choose that course?
What worked for you in university?
Can we talk a bit about what make you successful in achieving your goals?
Did you consider any other course?
Attitude
Were you every tempted to give up?
Why?
Did you ever think of giving up?
What kept you going?
Can you remember how you felt the first few days?
How did you hear about coming to college?
How did you feel at the end of the course?
Family and friends
Did you have any kids while in college?
What impact did you going to college have on your children?
What impact did it have on your spouse/partner, if you had any?
What sort of feelings did it give rise to in others?
Were your family always behind you?
How was it juggling family and friends?
What do you think were the expectations that were put on you?
What impact did it have on your friends at that time? How has it affected your home life?

Growing Up
Had you every contemplated going to college?
Did anyone in your family go to college?
Did you like school?
What level did you reach at school?
How did you get on with your peers?
Do you have any particular memories about school?

How did you get on with the teachers?

Did any of the teachers stand out in your memory?

If so, why?

Did you talk a lot about school in your family?

Would you say that you were a good student?

Did you ever think that you would go to college at any stage?

Appendix 5 Exit Survey for Focus Groups

Thank you for taking part in the focus group this evening. Could you please take a few moments to complete this short questionnaire? You do not need to answer any question that you consider sensitive and please remember that all information provided will be annoymised.

1) ***GENERAL INFORMATION***

NAME	
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE	
DEGREE TITLE AWARDED	
UNIVERSITY ATTENDED	
TOTAL YEARS SPENT PURSUING U/G[1] COURSE	
YEAR THAT YOU QUALIFIED	
YOUR AGE WHEN YOU QUALIFIED	

2) ***PERSONAL INFORMATION***

Please remember that you do not have to answer any questions that you consider sensitive or private. However, if you decide to answer, you may choose to answer 'YES', 'NO' or 'N/A' or provide a more comprehensive explanation in the space provided.

a) WERE YOU IN RECEIPT OF THE 'FREE FEES'[2] SCHEME? b) Would you have gone to college if this scheme was not available and you had to pay?	
a) WERE YOU IN RECEIPT OF ANY STATE ALLOWANCE (for instance back to education allowance) WHILST AT COLLEGE? b) Could you state the title of the allowance?	
COULD YOU GIVE A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ANY PAID WORK THAT YOU UNDERTOOK AT COLLEGE?	
COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES WHILST AT COLLEGE? For instance marital status and/ or dependent children?	

1: U/G = undergraduate course. 2: Free fees refers to the abolition of university tuition fees for undergraduates in 1996.

3) ***EARLIER ON WE DISCUSSED THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD REGARDING YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE JOB MARKET? (FOR INSTANCE;***

DID YOU FEEL YOUR AGE OR YOUR GENDER HAD ANY IMPACT ON YOUR GETTING/BEING REFUSED FOR A POSITION, IN YOUR OPINION WERE THE JOB/S GRADUATE APPROPRIATE,COULD YOU GIVE AN APPROXIMATION OF THE REMUNERATION? ***E.g. {per job or per annum} no remuneration, <E 1000, <E5, 000, <E10, 000, <E20, 000, <E30, 000,>E31, 00)*** *Please remember that you do not have to answer any questions, or aspects of questions that you consider sensitive or private.*

4) ***WHAT IF ANYTHING, DID YOU HEAR THIS EVENING, THAT YOU CONSIDERED CONTROVERSIAL/UNEXPECTED WITH REGARD TO BEING A MATURE STUDENT?***

5) ***IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU THINK SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN FUTURE DISCUSSION?***

6) ***YOU HAVE ALREADY MADE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THIS STUDY BY PARTICIPATING IN THIS FOCUS GROUP. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPAND ON THAT YOU SAID EARLIER OR IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE THAT YOU DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO SAY?***

6) AT A LATER STAGE, WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE FUTHER IN THIS STUDY BY: (please circle as appropriate)

COMPLETING AN INDEPTH QUESTIONNAIRE	YES	NO
PERSONAL INTERVIEW	YES	NO

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION THIS EVENING. YOUR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION WILL GREATLY INFORM THIS STUDY. IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE ELSE WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING, COULD YOU EITHER FOWARD MY CONTACT DETAILS TO THEM OR INCLUDE THEIR CONTACT DETAILS BELOW.

Appendix 6 Interview guide prompt for personal interviews

At the start of each interview session introductions are made , the participant is welcomed and housekeeping ensues where the participant is given a participant information leaflet (which they are told is theirs to keep) a consent form to sign and a question sheet where they are asked to write down some of their aims in coming to college. Then the participant is asked whether they have any questions so far and reminded that the interview is taped, and the tape is switched on.

Introduction

First of all, thank you X for agreeing to take part in this research. As you know I am interested in the lives and experiences of mature students who have graduated from Trinity College. I have some general questions prepared just to guide us through some of the dimensions that I am interested in hearing about so you must excuse me if from time to time I glance down at this paper. However the most important factor is that you have an opportunity to offer your own viewpoint and experiences so please feel free to discuss or raise any issues that I may have overlooked or if you find anything to personal or don't want to talk about it that is fine also.

Topic [60]	Early life	Purpose: Intergenerational mobility
Lead question	Just to start, I wonder could you tell me something about your own family background; for instance, how many were in your family, where you lived, what your parents did and so forth?	
Possible probes[61]	What was school like for you then? Did you like school? Would you have considered going to college when you left school? Would you have been able to go to	

[60] " the structure is sufficiently flexible to permit topics to be covered in the order most suited to the interviewee, to allow responses to be fully probed and explored and to allow the researcher to be responsive to relevant issues raised spontaneously by the interviewee" Ritchie & Lewis (2003:141)

[61] The probe questions (or similar) will be used to elicit information to inform on family circumstances and norms and their use will be contingent on the responses of the interviewee.

	college at that stage? Did any of your siblings go to college after school? What did you do straight after school? Would the money have been there should you have wanted to go to college? What do you think your parents would have thought of you going to college at say the age of eighteen? What about your peers at that time, did any of them go on to third level? Could you tell me what was the most usual then, would most of your schoolfriends would have done, was it the norm for instance to finish after junior (inter) cert or leaving, and what did people generally do then?	
Result	At the end of this section there should be data concerning: social background, social class, family structure, economic circumstances, educational amount, educational route, life trajectory, life cycle, the familial regard for education.	
Topic	Adult life	Purpose: inter and intra generational mobility. Personal attributes. Social and cultural capital. Unit properties.
Lead question	Can we talk a bit now about your own life, what you were doing in the years leading up to coming to college?	
Possible probes	What jobs did you have after leaving school? What type of responsibilities did you have in these jobs? Did you enjoy this work? Did you get married/ have children?	

	What did your partner (s) work at? When do you think you started to think about going to college? Was there any one thing that started you thinking of going to college? Did you feel that there were things you couldn't do without a degree? What would your salary have been before you started college/ on your last job?	
Result	This section should inform on: time span, direction, hierarchy, distance, speed, social class, group membership, status congruence.	
Topic	College years	Purpose: Personal determinants, educational mobility, status, cultural and social mobility.
Lead question (a)	What lead you to Trinity?	
	Why did you choose this course? Can you think back to the day you got your acceptance letter and talk me through it? So what were your feelings during your first few days? What did you expect? Were there many other mature students on your course? How did the lecturers react to you? What worked for you in college? What about the younger students, how did you mix with them? What about socialising? Did you join any societies? Are you still in touch with people from college?	

	Would you have maintained friendships with people from college? Would you have noticed any difference in the way mature men and mature women were accepted/settled into college? How did you find the work load? Can you talk me through how you managed the work load with your other responsibilities? Did you think the college/ your faculty were helpful/unhelpful to mature students? Can you give me an example? Looking back would you have chosen the same course? If not, why? Would you have chosen the same college? Did you fell that you fitted in? Were you ever tempted to give up? What do you think were the reasons that you kept going? How did you feel at the end of the course?	
Lead question (b)	Can you describe how your family and friends felt about you going to college?	

Possible probes	Did you have any children whilst you were in college? What stages were your children at when you were in college? How did you juggle your children and college? What impact did coming to college have on your family life? Did you feel that you had the full support of your spouse/ partner? Did it have any impact on your relationship with your spouse/partner? How did your friends handle you going to college? What sort of feelings did going to college give rise to in your family and friends? Have you kept up with your pre college circle of friends? What sort of effect do you think it had on your home life? Did college bring about any new hobbies or interests? Did going to college change anything in your relationships?	
Lead question (c)	Did going to college place a strain on your finances?	
Possible probes	Did you have any paid work while you were in college? Did you have any state allowances whilst in college? Did you find college expensive? How did you cope with expenses whilst at college? Was finance an issue when you were in college?	
Result	This section should inform on: attitude, family relationships, congruence, rigidity, origin effects, life fates, group	

	membership, distance	
Topic	Post college: (a) Employment (b) Finance	Purpose: economic, life cycle, status, congruence.
Lead question (a)	Had you given any thought to the type of job you could get as a result of this degree?	
	What sort of jobs have you had since leaving college? Include voluntary positions. Is there a difference now between the jobs you would have applied for before college and since? Let's discuss the jobs that you have applied for since leaving college? Did you apply for public and private sector jobs? Did you take part in any of the milk rounds? How did you feel when at interview? Did you feel that you were regarded as a graduate, in other words similarly to a younger graduate? Is the knowledge you gained on your course of specific use in this or any of your jobs? Is there anything else that you feel going to college has added to your ability to do your job? Have you been offered benefits/promotion? If you had a wish list, how would you like the next five years to unroll career wise? Do you think your degree is necessary for the job that you hold? Did you use the faculty or the careers service in applying for jobs? What other factors (than a degree)	

	come into play when you are applying for a job? Would you consider further study as necessary to advance in your position? Having been a mature student in the minority at college, would you expect it to be easy to blend in with all ages in the work force?	
Lead question(b)	Had you expected to benefit financially as a result of going to college?	
Possible probes	Could we talk about your salary expectations? Can we talk about whether you feel that you benefited financially from your degree? Could you talk a bit about salary and whether it is what you would have expected? Could you give a ball park figure as to what you earn? Do you think, based on money alone that you have benefited from having a degree?	
Lead question (c)	I am going to list a few salary brackets and I wonder if you would identify which one you fit in to, or if you would prefer to give me a figure that would be fine too: under E10,000, 11,000-20,000, 21,000- 30,000, 31,000-40,000 *(and so on until the participants acknowledges a bracket)*	
Result:	This section should inform on: age, social class, rigidity, personal traits, social norms, cultural and social capital, economic gain, speed, and trajectory.	
Topic	Education	Purpose: to examine the notion of systemic correction.
Lead question	Since 1996 third level education at state colleges has been available free	

(a)	for to those who have not got a degree. This was done in part to upskill the population to meet future needs and also, in a sense, to make society fairer, by giving opportunities to sections of society that would not have had the opportunities normally, such as those living in disadvantaged areas and of course mature students. Would you say that this has been achieved? Does having a degree put you, for instance, on an even par with traditional graduates?	
Possible probes	Do you think having a degree breaks down barriers? If you were to place in order of importance- age, holding a degree, gender, social class, what order would that be? How would you respond to the charge that making college free devalues a degree and puts it on par with the leaving cert and that now it's at least a masters that's needed? If this is the case do you feel that marginalised groups can overcome disadvantage? There is a body of opinion that is calling for the re introduction of fees as marginalised groups continue to be marginalised. In other words they are saying that free fees did not work. What would your opinion be of the reintroduction of fees? Would you have gone to college if you had to pay fees? It has also been said of mature graduates in particular that they are taking the jobs of younger graduates, have you an opinion on that?	

Lead question (b)	Would you have any thoughts as to whether there should be limits placed on college entry? Do you think that there are any benefits for society in general from mature students getting an education? Do the friends from your 'new world' mix well with the friends from your 'old world'? Could you give me examples of when you encountered a positive or negative reaction that perhaps you would not have been expecting? If a mature individual asked you 'is it worth my while going to college, what is it going to do for me?' what would your answer be?	
Results	This section should inform on: social norms, attitude, dissonance, experience, rigidity ascribed status, congruence, beliefs, and socialisation.	
Topic	Personal thoughts	Purpose: Personal growth, achieved status, congruence, social and cultural capital
Lead question	What do you think that you would be doing now if you had not done this degree?	
Possible probes	Have your hopes and expectations for life changed as a result of having a degree? If you could change anything about your personal circumstances what would it be? What do expect from life now? What would you have expected from life then? How would you make things happen?	

	How relevant is your degree to your present circumstances? Do you have any different hobbies, friends that are a result of having a degree? Has the degree changed your life substantially? If there was a downside to getting a degree what do you think it would be? Would you consider studying again?	
Lead question (c)	Going back to the aims that you wrote down at the beginning of this interview, *(read them aloud)* do you feel that you have achieved them?	
	Finally is there anything that you would do differently?	
Result:	This section should inform on : personal change, dissonance, confirmatory bias, attributes, norms, intergenerational mobility	

Appendix 7 Invitations to participate in interviews

Dear Graduate,

I am doing a PhD study entitled "**Was it worth it? The social, personal and economic returns of a third level education to mature students: a case study of Trinity graduates.**" The study is based on the experiences of former mature graduates of Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and is sponsored by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Your name was randomly selected when the sample was drawn by Dr. Andrew Loxley and I would like to invite you to participate in this study which is based on qualitative interviews. I would like to talk to you about your life, what your expectations were when you decided to go to college and the positive and negative experiences (academically and personally) of your time at Trinity. In addition, I would like to know what your life is like now, whether you are employed or not and in what ways your college experience and degree has influenced your life. For instance, would you choose the same course again? What returns do you feel that you got from the course economically, socially and personally?

Should you agree to participate, the interview will last approximately one hour. I can do the interview in Trinity College or at a venue more convenient to you. I will have to record the interview to facilitate analysis but your responses will be kept anonymous.

My supervisor Dr. Andrew Loxley is sending out these letters to you as I had no access to the names of former graduates. If you are willing to participate, and I do hope you will, please return the enclosed form in the stamped addressed envelope as soon as possible, **or alternatively** you can send me an email at: mgiblin@tcd.ie or phone me at 086 8526732 (mobile). If you would like to know more about the project before you make a decision then please email or phone me for further details.

I look forward to hearing from you, as your unique insights will make a valuable contribution to this study, while informing future policy and practice on third level education in Ireland.

Kind regards, Michele Giblin, Irish Research Council Scholar

WAS IT WORTH IT?



I am willing to participate in this research and am willing to be contacted by Michele so that an interview can be arranged. My contact details are listed below.

Name	
Phone Number (home)	
Phone Number (mobile)	
Email (if applicable)	
Address	

My preferred method of contact is: (please circle)

Home phone Mobile phone Email Letter to address

Many thanks for your interest and participation. I will be in touch with you to arrange an interview at your convenience.

Kind Regards,

Michele

Appendix 8 Participant information sheet for interviews

Dear former mature student,

I have been sponsored by the Irish Research Council to conduct research into postgraduate experiences of people who returned to education as mature students. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Loxley of the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. The data obtained will be used for research purposes in pursuit of a PhD at Trinity College Dublin.

I would like to know about your life, what your life is like now, whether you think your college experience has made it better, or indeed had any effect on it at all. For instance would you choose the same course again? What return do you feel that you got from the course economically, socially and personally? I am particularly interested in your experiences after college and whether you feel that your age, for instance, impacted in any way on your employment potential.

By participating in this interview you are making a valuable contribution to this study. This research will add greatly to the knowledge base available to policy makers, in coming from mature students who have gone through the system and had some years of post graduate experience. I would like to remind you that this session will be recorded for analysis purposes; however your responses will be kept anonymous. Material obtained may appear in the dissertation, in conference presentations, in papers submitted to academic journals and/or in other media. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. This does not interfere with your rights under the Freedom of Information Act 1977 (amended 2003).

If you have any questions about this research or indeed if you would like to participate in further stages, please contact me at: mgiblin@tcd.ie

Michele Giblin,
IRC Scholar,
School of Education,
Trinity College Dublin.

Appendix 9 Consent forms for Interviews

My name is Michele Giblin. I am a PhD student in the School of Education, Trinity College, Dublin under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Loxley.

Please find attached a participation information sheet which will give you details of my proposed research on mature students and their experiences after college. I hope that you will agree to participate.

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. The data obtained will be used for research purposes. This does not interfere with your rights under the Freedom of Information Act 1977 (amended 2003).
If you would like to ask any questions about this research you may do so by contacting me. My contact details are listed below.

Michele Giblin
IRC Scholar
School of Education
Trinity College Dublin
Email: mgiblin@tcd.ie

By signing this consent form you are agreeing to take part in this study.

I have read and understood the above and agree to participate.

Signature.....

Name in block capitals.....

Appendix 10 Exit Survey for Interviews

Thank you for participating in this study. Could you please take a few moments to complete this short questionnaire? You do not need to answer any question that you consider sensitive and please remember that all information provided will be annoymised.

1) ***GENERAL INFORMATION***

NAME	
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE	
DEGREE TITLE AWARDED	
UNIVERSITY ATTENDED	
TOTAL YEARS SPENT PURSUING U/G[1] COURSE	
YEAR THAT YOU QUALIFIED	
YOUR AGE WHEN YOU QUALIFIED	

2) ***PERSONAL INFORMATION***

Please remember that you do not have to answer any questions that you consider sensitive or private. However, if you decide to answer, you may choose to answer 'YES', 'NO' or 'N/A' or provide a more comprehensive explanation in the space provided.

WERE YOU IN RECEIPT OF THE 'FREE FEES'[2] SCHEME? Would you have gone to college if this scheme was not available and you had to pay?	
WERE YOU IN RECEIPT OF ANY STATE ALLOWANCE (for instance back to education allowance) WHILST AT COLLEGE? Could you state the title of the allowance?	
COULD YOU GIVE A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ANY PAID WORK THAT YOU UNDERTOOK AT COLLEGE?	
COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES WHILST AT COLLEGE? For instance marital status and/ or dependent children?	

1: U/G = undergraduate course. 2: Free fees refers to the abolition of university tuition fees for undergraduates in 1996.

3) ***IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU CONSIDERED CONTROVERSIAL/NOTABLE WITH REGARD TO BEING A MATURE STUDENT?***

4) ***IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU CONSIDERED CONTROVERSIAL/NOTABLE WITH REGARD TO BEING A MATURE GRADUATE?***

5) ***YOU HAVE ALREADY MADE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THIS STUDY. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPAND ON THAT YOU SAID EARLIER OR IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE THAT YOU DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO SAY?***

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH. YOUR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION WILL GREATLY INFORM THIS STUDY. IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE ELSE WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING, COULD YOU EITHER FOWARD MY CONTACT DETAILS TO THEM OR INCLUDE THEIR CONTACT DETAILS BELOW.

Appendix 11 Data analysis from Interview spreadsheet

THEMES

HISTORICAL

Aspirations

Goals

finance

Opportunity

Trigger

reasons for not going when younger

DECISION PROCESS

Satisfaction with course chosen

Career advancement

Interest

Love of topic

Indulgence

Status

Advice of academics

TRANSFORMATIVE

Growth in confidence resulting from having a degree

Growth in confidence resulting from having new skills

Growth in equality

Growth in confidence in personal interactions

Growth in confidence in professional interactions

Loss of confidence in personal value

Loss of confidence in degree potential

Loss of confidence in career potential

PERSONAL RETURNS

Helping family

Help in business development

Enhanced knowledge

Enriched conversation

SOCIAL SUPPORT: FAMILY/FRIENDS

Strain

Envy

Objections

Familial unease

Familial "say one thing and do another"

Difficult in juggling responsibilities

Difficulties due to inability to socialise

Difficulties in interactions

Pride

COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Academic- course tedious

Academic- course narrow focus

Academic - value of work placement

Academic- lack of clarity regarding progression

Academic- increase of understanding

Academic_ develop of analytic skills

Academic- loss of innocence and joy

Academic- vocational courses valuable

Financial- lack of money

Social - mature society

Social- lack of interaction with younger students initially

Social- lack of time to interact

Social- lack of inclination to interact

AGE

Factor in not participating more

Factor in not socialising more

Factor in learning

Positive factor in employment

Not a particular factor

A negative factor in employment

A neutral factor in employment

Initial class of origin- not usual to attend college

Initial class of origin_ lack of money

initial class of origin- getting a job important

initial class of origin- resentful

mastery belonged to other classes

Adult- elite college would not be for them

Adult- didn't fit in, social class

Adult- didn't fit in, amount of previous education

Adult- didn't have social networks

Adult- didn't have inner knowledge

Adult- usefulness of elite college

POST COLLEGE

Employment- voluntary

Employment- casual

Employment- public

Employment- private

Self employed

Employment- education

Happy with work situation

Wanted employment

Appropriate employment for degree course

Happy with career

Would do different course if had time all over again

Would do different course if had time all over again, as hard to get work

Went on to further study in same field for work purposes

Went on to further study in same field for pleasure

Changed to different field for further study

VALUE OF DEGREE

Employers impressed
Ageism
To narrow a view to take of college as employment facilitator
Community value
Personal efficacy and confidence
Your commitment keeps others employed
Loss of opportunity to progress in work due to college attendance
Distance and dissonance between qualifications and rung on ladder
Bar always rising
Good example for family
Spreading an empowering signal
Devaluing of degree if no work in field obtained
Like the old leaving cert

COLLEGE -MISC.,

Initial advice flawed
Assistance with problems
Career advice
Willingness to engage in discourse.
Agenda reflecting middle class values
Assistance from services
Assistance from academics
Location

Appendix 12

Central Statistics Office (CSO) classifications of social class (SC) and socio economic groups (SEG).

Social Class

The entire population is also classified into one of the following social class groups (introduced in 1996) which are defined on the basis of occupation:

1 Professional workers
2 Managerial and technical
3 Non-manual
4 Skilled manual
5 Semi-skilled
6 Unskilled
7 All others gainfully occupied and unknown

Socio-economic groups

A Employers and managers
B Higher professional
C Lower professional
D Non-manual
E Manual skilled
F Semi-skilled
G Unskilled
H Own account workers
I Farmers
J Agricultural workers
Z All others gainfully occupied and unknown

Appendix 13 Table 5.1: Tracking lifetime membership of socio-economic groups (SEG).

Name	Father's occupation (s)	Cso Seg	Mother's occupation(s)	Cso seg	Own occupation(s)	Cso seg	Spouse/Partner Occupation (s)	Cso seg	Own occupations post university	Cso Seg
Kate	Garda	D	Butcher	E	Student language teacher, Office worker Garda Housewife and fulltime mother	C D A	Self employed businessman	A	Setting up professional translation training company.	A
Maisie	Film business	C	Housewife		Office work Travel firm Housewife and fulltime mother Volunteer in school for disabilities	D D	Banking	A	Occupational Therapist in the HSE. Part time through choice.	C
Josey	_	Z	Housewife		Catering Project manager Housewife and full time mother	C C	Garda	C	Part time lecturing. Part time course implementation with the VEC	B B
Tara	_	Z	-	-	Community activist Housewife and full time mother		_	Z	Teacher	C
Ray		A	Housewife,	D	Disability service nurse	C	Housewife and full		Tenured Lecturer	B

	Salesman (own business)		Secretary				time mother Nurse, Counsellor	 C C		
Tash	carpenter	E	Housewife		Factory work Office work transport company in the docks Housewife and full time mother	F D D	Gardener	F	Office administrator in a University department organises extra mural courses.	C
Monamon	British Railways (office work)	D	Landlady	D	Office work in retail firm Office work in public company Office work in finance company Secretarial work in small company Sole trader –various businesses, writer	D D D D C C	Teacher	C	Children's novel writer Domain buyer	C C
Greta	Civil Servant	C	Housewife		Lab technician Housewife and full time mother Assisted husband with practice Carer for husband	C	Doctor	B	Administrative office work (executive officer scale)	C
Ursula	Father-economist Stepfather-semi state	B B	Housewife Part time bookkeeper	D	Lab researcher in Pharmaceutical company	B	Business man	A	General Practioner	B

Seansher	Plasterer	E	Housewife		Unemployed		n/a	n/a	Office work in university Part time teaching in VEC Care supervisor in centre for homeless teenagers	D C C
Fianna	Trucker	E	Housewife Part time tailoress	E	Clerical work in truck company Clerical in public company Trade union employee	D D C	Trade union employee	C	Trade union various policy roles	C
Marymau	Army Family const., business	D	Housewife		Teacher	C	Teacher	C	Unwell	
Gareth	Salesman	D	Housewife		Engineer	B	----------	_	Business owner	A
Anthony	Labourer	G	Housewife		Data collector & researcher	F	n/a	n/a	Tour guide	D
Annie	Painter	E	Housewife		Clerk Housewife and full time mother	D	Technician	C	Unemployed Volunteer in adult ed.,	
Linda	Dockside worker	E	Housewife		Clerk in private company Clerk in public service Childminder Service worker Housewife	D D D	Printer	E	Unemployed Volunteer in disability group.	
Daithi	Guesthouse	A	Housewife		TEFL teacher	C	Service worker	D	Part time teacher	C

	owner				Bar staff	D				
Martha	Farmer	I	Housewife		Executive officer	C	n/a	n/a	Retired	C
Mildred	Shop owner	A	Co –owner	A	Executive officer	C	n/a	n/a	Retired	C
Shiela	Labourer	G	Laundrywoman	F	Office clerk in shop Office clerk in multi-national company Housewife	D D	HR manager	A	Nurse	C
Ned	Scientist	B	Housewife		Student Coach assistant		n/a	n/a	Physiotherapist	C
Harry	Garda Inspector	A	Housewife		Primary Teacher	C	n/a	n/a	Dentist	B
Kevin	Shop worker	D	Shop worker	D	Service worker	D	Service worker	D	Programmer	C
Rita	Business owner	A	Company administrator	A	Arts manager	C	n/a	n/a	Unemployed Volunteer in arts organisation	-

Appendix 14 Table 5.7: Dispersion across faculties and time, degree level awarded, age of respondents.

Table: Dispersion across faculties and time, degree level awarded, age of respondents.

NAME	FACULTY	DEGREE	AWARD	LEVEL	AGE (when qual.,)	Total years
Kate	Arts & Humanities	TSM (Language & Sociology)	BA	2.2	51	6
Maisie	Health Science	Occupational Therapy	B.SC	2.1	49	4
Josey	Arts & Humanities	BESS	BA	2.2	41	4
Tara	Arts & Humanities	Sociology and Social Policy	BA	2.1	48	4
Ray	Health Science	Nursing	B Sc	2.1	43	1
Tash	Arts & Humanities	Geography	BA	2.1	42	4
Monamon	Arts & Humanities	Philosophy	BA	2.1	54	4
Greta	Arts& Humanities	Language & Sociology	BA	1ST	57	4
Ursula	Health Science	Medicine	MB	2.1	34	6
Seansher	Arts & Humanities	BESS	BA	2.1	36	4
Fianna	Arts & Humanities	BESS	BA	2.1	37	4
Marymau	Engineering, Maths & Science	Science	BA (3yr)	2.2	64	3 1/2
Gareth	Arts & Humanities	Psychology	BA	2.1	51	4
Anthony	Arts & Humanities	History of Art	BA	2.1	47	4
Annie	Arts & Humanities	Philosophy	BA	2.1	50	4

Linda	Arts & Humanities	Psychology & Sociology	BA	2.1	55	5
Daithi	Arts & Humanities	European Studies	B.A.	2.2	45	4
Martha	Arts & Humanities	Irish	BA	2.1	70	4
Mildred	Arts & Humanities	History	B.A.	2.2	70	4
Shiela	Health Sciences	Nursing	B.Sc	2.1	50	4
Ned	Health Sciences	Physiotherapy	B.Sc	2.1	28	4
Harry	Health Sciences	B.Dent.Sc.	B.Dent.Sc	1st	29	5
Kevin	Engineering, Maths & Science	B.A mod in computer science	B.A.	2.1	34	4
Rita	Arts & Humanities	Sociology and Social Policy	B.A	2.2	54	6

Appendix 15. Table 5.8: Aims and Results

Name	AIMS IN COMING TO COLLEGE	POST COLLEGE	ADDITIONAL STUDIES
Kate	Wanted to continue her study of language Wanted a degree to get employment	Started up own TEFL and language business aimed at professionals	TEFL qualification*
Maisie	To become an OT To prove to self that she could do it To stretch herself	Employment as an OT* (part time through choice)	-
Josey	Education Qualification Knowledge Success	Part time lecturing in VEC schools	-
Tara	Further learning Community activist_interested in society & governance, degree was all rounder Might get employment Nothing to lose.	Teacher in a VEC* scheme	-
Ray	Self development- had felt stuck in professional life in organisation that he worked for and wanted to develop self	Academic post in public university	Nurse tutor course Masters course (nursing)
Tash	To ensure her children would regard a college ed., as normal To enhance career prospects	Administrative post in public university	PhD
Monamon	To maybe try and get into journalism afterwards by way of Masters	Writer Domain buyer	-
Greta	To learn and to grow	Executive Officer	Masters in Social Research
Ursula	To become a doctor To be my own boss	General Practioner	Professional GP continuation studies
Seansher	To belong To be included To utilise intelligence in a focused, constructive way To explore options	Office clerk Part time VEC teaching Care supervisor	Masters in Social Research
Fianna	Change of career Specific areas of work-social justice, NGO's or TU's Long time interest in economic policy and politics Was interested in changing policy rather than operating existing policy	Senior trade union roles in policy and administration	-

Marymau	To work voluntary or part time in area of science Always had an interest in Science physics Interest in education and TCD	Unable to secure paid or voluntary work	-
Gareth	Had a child after 25 year gap Wanted work/life balance Interested in human behaviour q's, due to prior experience of consumer marketing and HR.	Business owner, combining engineering and psychology	Masters in applied personnel psychology Masters in psychotherapy
Anthony	Aim was to get a degree, had been passed over so many times for jobs as he didn't have a qualification despite years of practical work in his area.	Part time tour guide	PhD
Annie	Had left school early always felt uneducated Always had an ambition to complete education	Unemployed Volunteer in adult education service	Masters in adult education
Harry	To become a dentist To be financially comfortable, not rich.	Dentist	Professional continuation studies
Ned	To become a physiotherapist	Part time Physiotherapist	PhD student
Kevin	To get a better education for a better life To get a good job	Programmer	Masters in Programming
Shiela	To learn To get educated To become a nurse	Nurse	-
Rita	To make herself more employable To widen career choices To live the college experience that she felt she had missed out on.	Unemployed Voluntary work at administrative level	-
Linda	To have an education To better myself To work To achieve a degree	Unemployed Voluntary work with a disability group	-
Daithi	To gain a degree to continue to teach English Felt that he had to finish 3rd level education Back to education allowance seemed generous	Part time teaching Job-bridge	Diploma 2 Masters degrees
Martha	To complete education at a higher level To further study and become proficient in aspects of the Irish language Having retired from a busy job in the	Retired	Masters course

	civil service she found time long on her hands and not rewarding To stimulate her mind and keep active (mentally) by studying and testing herself To broaden her interests		
Mildred	After retirement felt that she needed to take up some form of study- just to keep her brain alert.	Retired	Masters course

* TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, OT: Occupational Therapist, VEC: Vocational Education Committees

Appendix 16 College Grid Statements

FORMAL (Relationship with academic& administrative group)

Plus

Ursula (277-280) " the feedback I get is that mature med students are easy pesy like because they know what they are about and they have come back by choice it's not because it is expected of them ... they are self motivated they can help to bring the group along a little bit" (age plus)

Maisie (279-282) "there were one or two times when I was asked to do an open day and give a lecture on therapy, there was one lecturer who couldn't make it for family reasons and they asked me to do it, "saying they will think you are a lecturer" (age plus)

Greta (359-366) "well lecturers you know some of them were better than others in doing their job, that is the same with everything in life. I never thought about what they thought of me.....I was a bit conscious of that * and I would try and be aware of that, but I didn't think, maybe some of the younger tutors, but I don't think so" (* regarding the notion that mature students ask a lot of questions)

Tash (578-579) "I loved the *** department they were really really good to me I mean my husband died before my final exams and they were absolutely fantastic to me "

Linda(727-733) " some of them were great and very supportive and some of them were very professional and came in and they did their lessons and went, no I wouldn't have been one for going to lecturers, I was trying to get in under the radar not be noticed, if you know what I mean. Just do my work and leave it at that ... I would have felt they were like teachers you know in school that you just go in and do your bit" (personal attitude (plus?) anticipation and delivery of perceived service)

Kate (405-)" the language department were excellent...I was the only mature student and I was a real nerd and if the other the younger students hadn't read a book they would say, "what was that about Kate quick" so I never saw myself as a student in a language department. I was a student but I was also a bridge between the staff and the youngsters, at times I could bridge the gap. I got on very well with the students and the lecturers" (use of age and attitude-plus)

Kate (413-416) "... there was a subject on crime and social policy which interested me but it wasn't part of the sociology degree ... I put my case forward... and I said can I do it and he said you have put a good case forward go for it (flexibility on the part of academic staff)

Kate (501-502) "... it actually got to the stage that I thought the Head of the language department had a box of hankies on his desk for me"

Kate (459-471) "the Head of the department rang me and said to do the exams and I said I can't study I am reading and it's not going in. I was having panic attacks at this stage....and he said to me you know you can do it ... he said leave the books and come in and do the exams ... he said you have done enough work during the past four years so just come in and do the exams... I stared down at the paper, I freaked and the Head of the Department came up and said "are you ok, take a few deep breaths and you will be fine, you do have it Kate" and I said ok and that meant you have no idea what that meant to me" (attitude of staff plus)

Annie (357-360) "... I had to produce an essay just after... he died so I had to go the Head of department ....asked could I have an extension on the essay, gave her the reasons and she said, "no problem and if you need counselling or advice here are the contacts" so I got that from her but I didn't avail of it I soldiered on" (attitude of staff plus)

Ray (280-285) "... they were very much involved with us and they made a point of spending time with us and that helped ... the course director is probably the most important role, if they are making an effort to build a rapport with you I think that connection is enough to help you get through the course" (attitude of course directors plus)

Andrew (345-355) " everyone said oh don't do that with history of Art it's too broad so instead I did *** and *** and I knew before Christmas that it was a bad bad idea because * and ** is just too big too broad a subject ... and it was taking up most of my time and what I liked was suffering so ... I spoke to the Head of the department and I went and put in an application for a transfer to history.... and I never regretted it ... because I got through first year history on 2/3rds of the course with the help of two very very good lecturers... and eh I have to say I have great respect for the old guard in Trinity ,, because time and time again I always found that the people you could rely on were the older generation" (guidance of academic staff plus)

Andrew (541) "I was more impressed by the old guard generally"

Seasher (256-260) "we got on very well we would make a point especially from second year onwards, the classes got smaller and we would approach the lecturers and they

were fine"

Mildred (339-341) "... the lecturers...were very good and the tutors, yeah I suppose if you needed them you could go to them... they were all very considerate

Minus

Seansher (278-280) "they were less holistic maybe less open to the full human experience maybe that's the way of putting it which was what I wanted to pursue that was the road I wanted to go down... I felt they were quite exclusive put it that way"

Marymau (940-942) " He kinda didn't talk to me you know. I didn't, I would go home and say that one thinks I am like the women, you know, the women down in the town you know, all I am fit for is peeling spuds at the sink, but he kinda warmed to me" (age, gender minus)

Martha (493) "I asked a few of them and they would say offhand like you know well, that's it, you don't think, we don't have time to go through it you know" (procedural knowledge minus)

Tara (137) "how interested he was that there were working class people coming in through Trinity College" (social class minus)

Tara (79-95) " I don't think you got any support whatsoever, none whatsoever. The social workers do because it's a social work department they'll put assignments back, extensions will be given 'em that's it... I got a high 2.1... I feel I could have done a lot better if you had gotten more support... I'll give you an example one of mine made their confirmation and I had an exam that morning and I went up and they said that's just it. So I sat the exam that morning so yeah things like that ridiculous things .... I thought it was inhumane, I did think it was inhumane. I could see why the kids had a blasé attitude towards it, the repeats in September they had copped on no one cares"

Tara (163-168) " one lecturer on crime said that people from disadvantaged areas and with gangland crime at the time, said they were living in fear. I said "no they aren't" he said "they are" I said "my mother in law lives in one of the biggest gangland areas in Dublin and we don't have to call over anymore at night 'cause there are police sitting outside the door 24/7". So that's the truth of it, these people who are teaching about these areas don't know anything about them which I found very interesting" (experiential knowledge minus staff)

Linda (683) "yeah it was very much you were left to yourself here you were supposed to be self-sufficient and just go home and do it" (minus –staff- engagement beyond lecture)

Andrew (550-561) "... I can't really complain about lecturers in general apart from one. I had a very strange relationship with one, probably because he reminded me very very much of an old fashioned school teacher and I remember going into seminars with a knot in my stomach... he would pick people out and ask them questions and if they got something wrong he would humiliate them in front of others and this was two floors above the anti bullying department... I juggled things in my last year of the degree to avoid having him though I loved the subject that he taught"

Andrew (612-616) " it used to amaze me that each department operates like it was its own little fiefdom and at times it's almost it is a bottleneck of essays and assignments at the end of term... puts undue pressure on students ... it's something that needs to be addressed" (admin., departments procedure minus)

Seansher (260-262) " the teaching assistants we found to be mmm you know quite like daddy's, like, preconceptions in their head like, emm, you know like all students were troublesome like, mmm, and they knew best well that was what I found"

Fianna (879-881) "... I just felt with him particularly he didn't like mature students in his class, he would concentrate much more so on younger guys" (tutor minus)

SUPPORTIVE GROUPS (Ancillary services such as counselling, pastoral tutor, student learning, career service, TAP)
Plus
Kate (497) "I mean the idea of a tutor I think is fantastic, the idea of it, it's like having a wife" (holistic plus)
Greta (205-209) "... they had appointed a mature student's officer in Trinity who contacted us before college started... it was wonderful and it also meant that you met other mature students and it meant that when you went in on the first day there were people who knew you"
Greta (254-266) "the younger ones... I was talking to two of them they said they nearly ran out of the place in the beginning ... I would have thought (they) were the

most confident....they felt terribly lonely and isolated when they came and this is where mature students were, what would you say, lucky, they came in and there was no actual focal point ... we had a mature student officer like there was a focus"

Greta (278-280) "I got a bad flu... and I was behind... and she has to sign things and ... all is done through her... it is a good service" (pastoral tutor)

Seansher (772- 778) " the supports that we had from Tap were also important in giving us a sense of, you know, it was the actual feeling of being supported, of being, like we think this is worthwhile. If you have someone saying it to you, this is worthwhile and we are behind you and you are our ambassadors in the college, while I think a lot of other mature students didn't have that, and it may have been harder and it may have contributed to them going and they may have dropped out" (holistic plus)

Maisie (275-276) "the chaplains well some of them anyway were nice and you were able to have a chat so that was good you know.

Tash (539-540) "when me husband died you know the support networks were really good ".

Tash (543-551) " she used to run a parents club every Tuesday... and there would be sandwiches there and it was a chance for parents to get together... so there was a lot of supports like that but you had to go looking for them but they were there you know"

Tash (556) "I had a really nice tutor too "

Tash (566) "I remained friends with some of the tutors in TAP I felt it was a really good support network

Linda (655-657) "well there was this mature students week that was great, you got a chance to meet a few people and you had a few familiar faces then and then you thought this would be okay you know everybody just seems ordinary you know"

Linda (751-754) "yes I think there is support there if you go looking for it and at some stage I remember my tutor would have been very good, my personal tutor. I am getting extensions, but then I think people knew my situation and they would have got extensions for, maybe more than the average student for stuff and then exams, exams I would have sat a few in the August"

Linda (777-778) " I went to the essay writing courses there are ones about essay writing and things like that. I went to some of them difficult to go to anything else" (student learning plus)

Linda (806-807) "he was brilliant, he was very, very good. He was very understanding, but you know that's life isn't it? People have to struggle with these situations" (personal tutor)

Kate (360-364) " ... we were very fortunate we had been contacted by a lovely lady and she had been nominated by Trinity to look after mature students so we all got in the week before college started... we had lunch together, had a couple of seminars, we were treated very, very well, so when it came to the week itself we knew one another, we had someone to have coffee with there was no going to Trinity and being there on my own (mature student officer plus)

Kate (390-392) "... the counselling service in Trinity...very useful"

Kate (453-457) " ...on the eve of my finals ... a fear came over me, this was it, the last hurdle and I wasn't able to make it and I availed of all the services and my tutor and the language department stood behind me and supported me"

Seansher (217-224) "I would have found it very difficult. I maybe haven't spelt it out very well there was a lot of support from TAP going over, as well carrying over and then we would come back here a lot of the time and then over the course of my four years I would have come back and.....given talks and then I would have given grinds" (TAP source of ongoing support and engagement plus)

Andrew (571-583) "there was an optional test... for dyslexia and I had suspected that I might have had a problem there and that was confirmed... I was registered with the disability service, they saw to it that I was. I sat the papers separately, that there would be a scribe mm but otherwise I kept quiet about it"

Andrew (657-659) "there was a nun she was ...working over in Pearse street and ... she was very helpful in terms if my dyslexia and coming to terms with it and so on" (student learning plus)

Mildred (326-327) "... you would meet someone who was an expert on whatever and it was a great help, it was great, they would sort things out for you" (Information technology services)

Minus

Tash (567-569) " Now I never went to the counselling, well I went to bereavement counselling once and over family issues and didn't really like that 'cos I felt it was geared towards younger students"(age minus)

Andrew (667-671) " ...I can't say that I found the career service any good yes they came in and they gave us a talk and towards the end I remember going down to them and they gave me very little that was relevant to my subject area that's being honest ... so that for me was a big problem" (subject knowledge minus)

Andrew (410-414) "... the first few days in here we were taken in about a week earlier before everyone else as mature students... the extra week in hindsight not really

(helpful) I felt that the problem was you did not get long enough to gel with the other mature students" (mature service)
Annie (363-376) "I found them useless. I availed of them in forth year and to tell you the truth I was disgusted with them I found them useless... they have a nice job over there all of them, they tap away at their computers, they have all their files there, but there is a gap and vagueness. They are not really, are in your case or on your side, they are just doing their job they are not really interested" (age minus)
Annie (401-402) " I was getting a small reimbursement for travel and that came from TAP. I think I was getting about E150 a month so that was used to go towards the cost of coming in and out of the place"
Monamon (662-664) "I found him terrible... he was terrible in fact a girl, as I went into him a girl came out crying, and I found he was like sort of a he had no connection, but he said just go along and see how it is going and that was it, I left in the same condition as I went in" (personal tutor-minus)
Kate (536-537) "... if they had taken us as a small group I think we would have been able to convince them, look what's out there for us now" (career service minus)
Seansher (467-469) "there were kind off career sessions with career officers and the like ok but a lot of times most of the mature students kind of felt left out"

Seansher (771-774) "it is a big cultural change and I think the supports that we had from TAP were also important in giving us a sense, you know, it was actual feeling of being supported of being like we think this is worthwhile if you have someone saying it to you this is worthwhile and we are behind you"

Marymau (1154-1155) "I rang her a few times and she said a sentence to me on the phone that I got basically a bit huffed up over it she said I caused them enough trouble" (personal tutor minus)

SEMIFORMAL GROUP (clubs, societies and voluntary groups operating under the umbrella of the college community)
Plus
Greta (283-286) " oh fresher's week I think I joined the whole lot... the only one I went to Vincent De Paul and I did collecting with them and I didn't go to anything else"
Greta (289-292) "I would have gone to sort of things that were on you know, if they had talks I would go on things that would interest me but not sort of things that would,

you know, social meeting, bits of things, and I don't know why I fully intended to do so in the beginning, just never got round to it, didn't fit, there was always someone to talk to so didn't need to do that (exercising choice and not going to mature student society)

Josie (142-147) " most definitely your life is not your own... it's not your own when you have children, it's not your own when you study, and it's very hard to get time for yourself and there's no socialising much, but I think that's what you sign up for"(exercising choice)

Andrew 9489-491) "yeah that photographic club I liked because it was full of people that I thought were outsiders in one way or another, a lot of Erasmus students, a broad selection of people from different countries which I liked I tended to like them much better"

Ursula (292-293) " I went to all the parties, I went to the Science balls, I went to all the med balls, I went to all the good things. I didn't bother with all the other stuff"

Maisie (273) "I went to an orchestra thing for a while"

Tash (477-484) "I got very involved in the mature students ... the year I was there it was actually quite good there was a very good committee a lot of drinks "

Tash (490) "we had a lot of social outlets from TAP as well"

Monamon (414-415) "It was the Trinity News ... I joined, they handed out things every week asking would you do this, would you do that "

Monamon (425-457) " the main one I joined was the tennis ...I used to play myself in the Irish things ... I did have pains and aches, you know the odd ache and pain in my legs and that but I kept on playing my tennis... they were so nice... on the first night that you joined they had a competition for fresher's and I won it beating some of the lads that thought they were all that ... I suppose I was always childish. I mean I was always playing ball games and things marbles and still have collections of those, you know what I mean, I probably in many ways was younger than them you know"(accomplishment in field- peer acceptance- lack of personal age status rigidity)

Annie (307-312) "I joined the history society the Historical Society but never went to anything because what I was trying to juggle was home life and college life and I basically treated it like a job and therefore I was going to be there for a certain amount of time and there was a certain amount of stuff that I had to do" (exercising choice)

Seansher (234-236) " I remember going to a few sessions in what is it the Hist and the Phil and then I would have used the gym a fair amount and then going to the Pav, the Buttery things like that

Marymau (954) "I joined the choral society I loved that"

Minus

Linda (858-867) " I would have liked to have enjoyed the College experience in its entirety I suppose* if you didn't have obligations, if you have a family to look after, probably not...there was a bit of a social life in the buttery ** and sometimes I went to that....I didn't go to the Hist or the Phil, I would have loved to have been able to do all that" (* in response to a question as to whether she thought it possible to enjoy the college experience, ** buttery was a bar, family circumstances restrained participation rather than self choosing not to participate)

Monamon (373-379) "I joined the mature students group... but the thing was a lot of them didn't have happy marriages and they hadn't realised that they hadn't happy marriages until they came, so there was bed hopping and all kinds of clicks and squabbles, you know what I mean, I lent her my book and that sort of thing and a lot of them were business students and they sat together and I would be out of that you know what I mean" (did not feel she had much in common with purposive group nor did she feel included)

Andrew (492-518) "the equestrian club or the riding club I can't remember what it is called nowadays it sort of confirmed what I thought ... in the riding club... there were even one or two that I came across that when they came to Trinity brought their horses to Dublin and put them in livery on the outskirts now I am not saying that that's what every member of that society did but it fitted into the notion... I would have been seen as a misfit absolutely no doubt about I would have been seen as an outsider "

INFORMAL GROUP

Plus

Greta (226-229) " I would have got on well with them, you would have coffee and would compare notes and sometimes they would tell you things and that, and sometimes they would say come on we are going, you know, and I wouldn't usually go and right and you know it was nice that you would ask ".

Greta (236) " It was enriching to be alongside younger people like that ... I would have known I wasn't one of them. I wouldn't have wanted to be one of them, but I was glad I got on with them at the same time because you do group projects and that and it is necessary to be able to get on".

Greta (248-251) "my friends from college would have been them, not the ones of eighteen or whatever but I found the best place for hanging around would be with the people who smoked, I didn't smoke but that is where you found the mature students

and that is where you got all the gossip and the rest of it" (friends inside-specific social space)

Monamon (387-390) " now my main place for socialising n Trinity was the cloakroom did you know the ladies down there *** and *** that's the place I went to and chatted they became my friends, all the mature students who called into them or young students who called in, well there were a few going" (friends inside)

Ursula (166-169) "I went in with the intention of treating it like a nine to five job and didn't expect to have a great time from a social point of view because I would be much older than them and was pleasantly surprised that I had a better experience as a student going in at twenty eight doing medicine than I had at seventeen doing chemistry and I have made friends from there that are close friends still" (friends inside)

Maisie (232-233) "I was just one of the girls and the only time they would have acknowledged that I was older was when they would chat to me about boyfriend troubles" (friends inside)

Maisie (234-239) "there was a lecturer ... the mature student that was a bit younger than me, she thought he was lovely and so did all the younger ones. I suppose he was all right, but if they needed to ask anything they would get me to do it ... because you know I was safely married and I could be asking him questions without appearing to be chatting him up, or you know, so it was actually quite funny" (positive value of age)

Tash (503-506) " we used to have coffee with them and go for drinks with the class I always made sure we'd go for drinks with the class and that and we had a good laugh with them. There was a bunch that we really got on brilliantly with and there was a bunch that never spoke to us"(friends inside)

Maisie (258-259)" the thirty odd of us mixed, we did, mmm my close group was three school leavers, Louise was ten years younger than me ....we were pals throughout and we still are"(friends inside)

Maisie (261-270) " I was happy to come home but at the same time I used to go down to the Pav ... we went to a nightclub once... it was vile... so when they asked me for ID going in, it was a student's night and they asked me for ID, they said they had to check my age and I was delighted and said can I come out and go in again? The girls thought this was hilarious that I was carded but generally speaking if they were going to nightclubs I didn't go...I don't think that many of them saw me as an old fogey or anything certainly they didn't make me feel like that anyway"(friends inside, home balance)

Maisie (334) "they were absolutely behind me and encouraged me" (family plus)

Greta (351-357) "the friends I made inside college would have met other friends of mine.....but not, well, you don't intermingle various groups anyway ... you know you do different things with different groups of friends, but it wouldn't have been that there was a difference, it is just that it is nice to make new friends when you are older as well you know you tend to have the same friends" (maintaining and making new friends)

Tash (537-538) " I found the staff and the students, you know, the young kids were fantastic, you know, when me mother died and then later when me husband died "

Tash (595-597) " one thing I suppose with younger students, was with us they would make sure that we would go to all the exam revision classes because we would ask question"(age plus instrumentally)

Linda (696-702)" socially it was great yeah I think I met up with a group of mature students then, that was great, that made such a difference, it really did because it made me feel that other people were feeling a bit of pressure. I thought I was the only one feeling this way, the only one that wasn't perfect, but really everybody felt the same way, you were worried trying to work and trying to get the books and everybody was struggling, finding it hard, you know, finding things, finding exams hard so, you know, when you hear that you think always okay I'm not the only one, you know, and it was great support here, work wise and personal wise" (age- friendship with similar aged others)

Linda (847-850) "they were disgusted with me really when I said I was totally finished, I've had enough, I can't take any more, they said my husband said, "don't even think of it", but having said that it didn't always translate into support, practical support, like having dinners done, and the house clean, that kind of novelty wore off after very early on you knows so" (family plus)

Monamon (367-371) " ... the main problem with me was drink. They would ask me to come to their parties in the early days out of politeness, you know, and I didn't drink, I never drank, and it didn't interest me and it was when I was in this writing group, I would have gone over once and this guy, we were having such fun, and he was trying to drag me over and I remember my son had said he was going over and I didn't want to be there with him" (traditional aged student friends plus)

Kate (371-372)" I smoked, so I went out to smokers' corner and you meet everyone in smokers' corner, and you meet everyone and I got on with everyone in smokers corner"

Kate (598-609) "... because I had children I understood them and I suppose I wasn't the mammy but I suppose they could come up and have a chat and if one of them had a

problem they might come up and have a quiet word with me.. they were helpful to me, it worked both ways, it wasn't as if, you know, I was the mature student, I was one of them, if you know what I mean, at times I was the mature student and at times I was just here.... there was great rapport there...for me it was very empowering" (friendships with younger students)

Annie (299-300) " they were very nice they were really, very helpful especially when you were in when you would be struggling... if you were sitting in a tutorial before the lecturer came in ... they were very helpful very nice"(interactions with younger students)

Annie(282-288) "....there were matures on the course that I had picked, I got to know matures ... a good friend of mine she is 74 years of age, she was at a tutorial with me... we soon discovered that there was a lot of work ... so we came to an agreement over having cups of coffee that we would cut it in half, one of us would do some research or photocopying of this and the other would do the other" (co operative and age – friendship)

Annie (280) "well I went in I didn't sit at the front but very near the front you know where anybody over 25 sits"

Ray (234-235) "socialising would be well when you are kind of an established family man, it's kind of probably kind of Christmas time, well most of the socialising would have been Christmas and Easter and that kind of thing"

Seansher (202-205) "there would have been five from TAP ... we were getting each other through college"

Seansher (238-241) " well the class drinks the class was so big initially....they broke down into in second or third year, maybe a group of us would go but ... it was mainly ... mostly matures but ... it would have been some of the younger ones, I mean we got on well enough with them but it was mainly matures"

Marymau (946-951) " I had a few very good friends actually in the year ahead of me. I met a lady from Tipperary she was ahead of me... she wasn't mature she would have been of the Leaving Cert. I don't think they had any matures that year"

Marymau (983-994) " I had a lot of fried groups from Kerry and Cork I had lots of boys who were friends and who were very good to me ... but I wouldn't be going anywhere with these it would be girls they would be looking for you know ... I had no contact with other mature students"

Fianna (821-835) " I (mix) with Claire and Anne to be honest ... the three of us were kinda tight ... there were a couple of younger students, in fact I still have facebook contact chats with a few of them who kinda found me on facebook. I would have had

good crack with some of the lads but I still would have done my own thing. I might have had coffee with them, you know, but I certainly wasn't interested in going out with them at weekends or any of that kind of thing "

Fianna (904-909) "you would kinda feel it in first year because most of them are very, very young, but generally they matured, they matured tremendously between second and third year and by fourth year the guys and girls were completely different people to talk to and I felt I had more in common with them by fourth year, yeah in first year they were kids and you know, just schoolkids. They were very, very young but by fourth year they had it sussed, the difference in them was amazing"

Fianna (968-970) "my family was very proud... my friends they were fair play to you that's fantastic (friends outside)

Gareth (34-37) "I mixed with classmates who were 18, 19 year olds and I was invited to 21st parties and all of that ....I was very much accepted by my younger peers not as a vintage mature student and I didn't mix with the mature students in general I didn't, didn't not mix with them but I didn't seek them out "

Josey (461-465) "I had a limited time in college ... and I'd go for a coffee with the people that I was sitting beside in a lecture, even if there was a younger person sitting beside me I'd say the same thing, do you know what I mean? No I would not have gotten into the social scene 'cause it wasn't my cup of tea even if it was older people I wouldn't have been into it you know"

Mildred (268-276)" well I got to know new friends that I had not met before and I met up with them at intervals between classes and in the tutorials and in between times and we got to know each other. We met for coffee and that so maybe at lunchtime and whatever and I met up with my friend... she had done a different course...a few of them would be my age, nearer my own age, maybe in their 40's, we kind of gravitated together because of the age group. I got to know them even though there would be an age difference"

Mildred (530-534) "...we had a system between us.... we would take a book each and we would make a few copies.....it was great there was that sort of cooperation and camaraderie it made things easier"

Minus

Ursula (18) " there were a lot of sacrifices including a relationship so when I initially returned I had a serious boyfriend in abroad and we kept that going, so a lot of the time I wasn't always in medicine when I should have been."(Friends outside)

Tash (938-940) "I think they would have thought, "Oh who does your one think she is"? getting above your station in life kinda thing, so I think people slightly backed away from me on that level but then I made new friends and I thing that's what life is anyway, because I think your friends change as you go through life" (friends outside)
Tash (472-477) " he was quite happy when I went to Trinity... it was hard we had plenty of ups and downs through it you know. You go into a whole new life really and I tried to include him as much as possible" (family)
Tash (508) " you have little cliques like them in every class, you know, I never took it as something being to do with being a mature student you know I found I was more conscious of me accent than my age" (friends- consciousness of accent)
Kate (424-426) "there wasn't time because you had to study and I had children and there were also school runs and I was doing homework and I was a mother and a full time student"
Linda (704-707) "I wouldn't have really, no, while I don't think there was really that many opportunities, I don't think they were terribly interested in mixing with older people as such, you would get to know some of them in tutorials and they were helpful and obliging, but you wouldn't have mixed with them, I wouldn't have mixed with them" (age, mixing with younger students)

Kate (338-341) "... a few comments from sister in laws that I would have considered friends...along the lines of what was I going to do when I failed my first exam" (family support minus)

Kate (432-433) "It became different. I had a social life as a married women but then it became different, I didn't know, I just became a student and a mum" (redefining roles, effect on outside friendships)

Annie (458-464) "I lost a lot of them ... when I went into education ....you see there is gaps between where you are going for your mind is taking you and what you are thinking, it's lost in translation with these people that you knew... they are looking at you as if you are crazy, as if you are a threat to them" (outside friends falling away)

Andrew (431) "I didn't gel with the 18 year olds I found it a solitary experience"

Andrew (454) "I found myself between a rock and a hard place because a lot, a lot, most of the mature students in my department were a generation older"

Andrew (482-483) " I never felt that I fitted in, well how could I, with the eighteen year olds, and I never felt that I fitted in with the majority of the mature students"

Andrew (646-650) "on the last day of exams I was sitting on the grass with a friend of mine...he was a male mature student, we were both in a minority to begin with and we ended up sitting on the grass with everyone else on the last day and we were saying to ourselves that none of the others were associating with us, and how little they know of us, and how little we knew of them after four years, I don't know, I don't know".

Seansher (359-364)" ... generally my friends were supportive, no, they were supportive, but over the years I found myself pulling away from them, as well a distance kind of grew between us.... people change and that's it, but generally I would have retained very civil relations with them even if on an occasional basis" (outside friends- exercising choice, self)

Appendix 17 Brief biographies of Interviewees

Kate

Faculty: Arts and Humanities

Age when qualified: 51

Degree: TSM (language and sociology)

Award &Level: B.A. 2.2

Educational amount on leaving secondary school (c)[62]: Leaving Certificate (c)

Educational route: convent schools (state and private)

Initial SEG position: D

Adult SEG position: A

Spouse/partner's SEG position: A

Post degree SEG position: A

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree) (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Kate had gone to primary school in her local area of North Dublin and attended secondary school in Dublin city. This gave her two different sets of friends, both sets having different expectations from education. Her local friends would not have anticipated going to college whereas it would not be uncommon for the girls attending her secondary school to aspire to this. Kate enjoyed school, enjoyed the sociability and sport. A particularly encouraging teacher urged her to apply for teaching college, whilst passing the interview, she didn't get the required grades. Through contacts, she worked as a language teacher abroad and re-sat the Leaving certificate on two occasions but again did not get the necessary grades. Eventually, at her mother's instigation, she did a commercial course which she hated, paid for by her parents. She had various jobs, working on an assembly plant line, in a travel firm and also as a Garda. Being in the early batches of women to join the force, she worked hard to make sure gender did not feature in her assignments, striving for and being included in units dealing with highly dangerous and sensitive work. She married a business man and as a result had a very comfortable lifestyle. She left the Gardai when it became too difficult to juggle motherhood and work, although she really missed the world of work. Her decision to come to third level was prompted by a chance meeting with an old acquaintance who had knowledge of the process. She completed a foundation course in preparation for applying to third level. She started the process at a time when her marriage was disintegrating and her children were ranged from mid teens downwards.

[62] (c) denotes that examinations were passed and thus credentials awarded

During her time at college, she was dealing with an acrimonious divorce, the fallout of which included problems with her children and becoming financially poor. She has some level of practical support from her mother in terms of providing her with living accommodation from time to time. She loved her studies and thought of them as a haven from her tumultuous life. She made friends in college but didn't socialise much beyond studying as she still engaged with the duties incumbent in her role as mother. Near the end of her time in college, she had a huge crisis in confidence in addition to having specific family problems develop, which resulted in her having to have two stints off books. Overall it took six years to complete the degree. She credited her language department and her personal tutor with keeping her on track and encouraging her to sit her finals. During her time off she had done a TEFL course and following on from her degree set up a language training and translation business with the assistance of the business unit in Trinity College. She retained contact with some of the friends that she had made during her time in college.

Josey

Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 41
Degree: BESS (Business, economics and social studies).
Award &Level: B.A. 2.2
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate(c)
Educational route: convent schools (state)
Initial SEG position: Z
Adult SEG position: C
Spouse/partner's SEG position: C
Post degree SEG position: B
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Josey grew up in Dublin and wanted to do nursing but failed biology in her Leaving Certificate. She had intended to repeat but decided to travel instead and then, through her brother's connections got involved in the catering business. Some of her school friends did continue into nursing studies. She liked both the work and the remuneration but was never happy that she didn't finish her education. Twenty years after having left school she was at a personal crossroads in that she was no longer working, was married and was rearing a very young family of five children. She saw an advert in the paper about TAP and applied for this, following on from which she got a

place in BESS. Also influencing her decision was that she saw the time that her children were in primary school as her best window of opportunity to engage in study at third level. During her time in college she juggled the roles of mother and student and did not engage in extracurricular social activities. She has retained some friends from her time in college. Immediately upon finishing her exams she applied for and got temporary lecturing positions in some private third level colleges in Leinster. With the downturn in the economy, her contracts were not renewed. She felt that the 'name' of Trinity was sufficient a draw to get her employment in those positions without having already completed a master's degree, although a master's degree would normally have been required. She is now working in a paid position for an association that provides health education to instituions. She had the emotional and practical support of her husband and sisters when in college.

Monamon
Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 54
Degree: Philosophy
Award &Level: B.A. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)
Educational route: convent schools (state and private)
Initial SEG position: D
Adult SEG position: C
Spouse/partner's SEG position: C
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Monamon was born and raised in Co Kildare. She went to a local national school and commuted to secondary school in Dublin. In that era secondary school attendance (late fifties- early sixties) required fee payments and she credits her mother with being resourceful in finding the necessary monies. Monamon always enjoyed reading and school but was known as the poet and her twin sister as the 'bright one' which she felt impacted on her motivation to an extent. On completing her Leaving Certificate she did not get a sufficiently high grade to get a bursary or scholarship. She completed a secretarial course which she loved, and went to work for a retail company and subsequently for a public company, always in an office capacity. As a wife and mother she set up a variety of small businesses, having a stall, establishing a School of

Chiromancy and writing fiction. She would have toyed with the idea of coming to college throughout her life, however it was the introduction of the "free fees system[63]" that got her motivated and she re-sat her Leaving Certificate (twice) eventually meeting the entry requirements to study Philosophy at TCD. She was married and had three children, the youngest being in college at the same time as she was doing her degree. She had practical and emotional support from her husband and family whilst doing the degree. During her time in college, she joined some societies and was a very active participant. She would have made friends with all ages in college. Upon finishing, she had hoped to do a master's degree in journalism but has suffered severe health problems. She has continued writing and publishing, and is engaged in other web based businesses.

Annie

Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 50
Degree: Philosophy
Award &Level: B.A. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Intermediate level
Educational route: convent school (state)
Initial SEG position: E
Adult SEG position: D
Spouse/partner's SEG position: C
Post degree SEG position: -
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Downwards

Annie was the eldest of a family of ten and there was no encouragement to stay in education. Annie's mother removed her from school prior to her Intermediate Certificate as a job had become available in a local business. Her parents moved home several times in Annie's life and she feels that this had an effect on her education and her ability to make friends. Annie worked as an office junior and from the start of her working career, was always self motivated and took courses in an effort to upskill. Despite realising that she was a competent person, Annie never had confidence in her ability to pursue her education partially due to her mother and also due to the influence of a teacher in her early years who told her she would never amount to

[63] A free fees initiative was introduced by the Labour Government Minister Niamh Breathnach in 1996. Students paid a registration fee but the Government paid for tuition fees for third level study.

much. After her marriage and when her children were young, she would have done various courses out of personal interest. It was a sister in law who found out about the TAP course and encouraged her to apply. From TAP Annie applied and was accepted to study History in Trinity. Annie was married, and had two school going children whist at Trinity. She had the full support of her husband whilst studying. She made some friends in college that she has retained but had no interest in getting overly involved in the social scene. She really enjoyed studying her subject and on leaving Trinity completed a post graduate course in adult and community education, having an ambition to teach in this area and to engage other adults in education. She feels very bitter about what she views as systemic errors in the education of adults, which she views as being SEG driven with not enough attention paid to incorporating the experience and advice of those from non traditional student SEG backgrounds, into curricula and agendas. She has been employed in a voluntary capacity as an adult educator but has recently resigned as she felt there was never going to be an opportunity for paid work in this sector.

Linda

Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 55
Degree: TSM (Psychology and Sociology)
Award &Level: B.A. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Intermediate level (c)
Educational route: convent school (state)
Initial SEG position:E
Adult SEG position: D
Spouse/partner's SEG position: E
Post degree SEG position:-
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Downwards

Linda came from a working class area of Dublin. She was considered bright in school and was one of only six girls chosen to do honours maths in the Intermediate certificate. Although her parents were supportive of education she felt that they paid lip service to it for the most part. Her father died the year she did her Leaving Certificate and she left school to get a job and help contribute to the family coffers. This had not been requested but she felt it was the right thing to do. She got as an office junior in a stockbroking firm and felt out of depth socially. She then went on to

work in the health service and the civil service where she was happier with the social mix. There was a brief period in her childrearing when she was not doing paid work. Her work ranged from waitressing to office work. On the birth of her last child (who had multiple intellectual disabilities) she got involved in government funded return to work courses in order to upskill to meet the demands of the job market. She secured part time work through which she met mature students. In addition she attended various courses run in a local school. From there she did a certificate course which led to her making application to third level institutions. She chose Trinity College over the other colleges but was worried about fitting in. This worry continued throughout her first year despite meeting and making friends within the mature community. She got on well with the younger students also. Her time at college was very difficult due to the demands of having a child with disabilities, even though she had the support and encouragement of her family. She had to repeat a year due to these problems. She found Trinity to be accommodating to her problems and had high praise for her personal tutor. Overall she enjoyed her time in Trinity in terms of liking the course and the friends that she had made. Since leaving she had attempted to complete a Masters degree but was not able to do so due to her role and responsibilities as mother to a child with intellectual disabilities who was growing older and as a result had less state provision. She is engaged in voluntary work. However, she feels that, although she loved her subject matter, in hindsight she should have done something else as studying for four years in psychology qualified her for nothing in comparison to students she knew who spent four years doing vocationally orientated work such as social work or speech and language studies. Nevertheless, she feels the knowledge she gained is of use in her voluntary work and in acting as advocate in her daughter's treatment.

Maisie

Faculty: School of Medicine

Age when qualified: 49

Degree: Occupational Therapy

Award &Level: B.Sc. 2.1

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)

Educational route: convent schools (private)

Initial SEG position: C

Adult SEG position: D

Spouse/partner's SEG position: C
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Maisie grew up in a middle class district in Dublin and went to a private primary school run by a convent order which she hated, as she had been bullied. She felt that a lot of her problems stemmed from being placed in the in with an older age group. Her opinion of education at that time (late fifties- seventies) was that a lot of power was invested in the opinion of the teacher with parents having very little influence. Her secondary education was in a convent school run by a different order of nuns. She enjoyed the social side of school, but didn't think of going to college and felt that girls were not really encouraged to continue in education. She completed her leaving certificate. Her parents paid for her to do a language course as she wanted to work in the travel industry. She left the travel company eventually and lived abroad for a time as a feature of her husband's occupation. It was through voluntary work in a school for children with disabilities that she became interested in doing Occupational Therapy. By this stage her children were in third level. Despite the encouragement and support from her family and staff where she volunteered she was nervous about her ability in committing to third level education. Her husband found a return to education course leaflet and encouraged her to get engaged in the process. She enjoyed her time as a student, and was determined not to be "the mammy" of the group. She made some good friendships with students of all ages and remains in contact with them. A seminar given on her foundation course by a past student advised students to pay attention to their family relationships and even though she had the full support of her husband, she was mindful of this advice and preferred to spend time at home rather than engaged in extracurricular activities in college. She did however, go to some events with her classmates and greatly enjoyed both the academic and social side of college life. On leaving she had a choice of two jobs in her field, and, having chosen one, was promoted during the years that she spent there. She has recently taken early retirement and plans to travel with her husband and possibly engage in other ventures.

Ursula

Faculty: School of Medicine

Age when qualified: 34

Degree: Medicine

Award &Level: M.B. 2.1

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)

Educational route: convent school (state)

Initial SEG position: B

Adult SEG position: B

Spouse/partner's SEG position: A

Post degree SEG position: B

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Ursula was educated in Dublin. She enjoyed school and particularly Science. Her parents were supportive of education, but not necessarily focused on third level attendance. They paid for her to attend college in the first instance through a bonding tax arrangement. In her secondary school she was in the top stream, and approximately half of her class went to university but this would not have been reflective of the other six streams. On leaving school, she narrowly missed being accepted into medicine. Instead, she did a degree in Science and subsequently worked for a large pharmaceutical company in Scotland. In her late twenties she decided to fulfil a lifelong ambition, applying and being accepted for medicine in Trinity. She had been very well paid in her pharmaceutical job and this together with summer work during some of her student years, facilitated her payment of fees for her medical degree. She had been in a serious relationship which subsequently broke down when she was studying. She had the support of her family in Ireland whilst studying. However, she supported herself financially from her savings and her summer work. She very much enjoyed both her studies and her social life whilst at college and did not see her age as a problem to engaging with the other students. She began a second long distance relationship whilst at college and married in her final year of her primary medical degree. During her subsequent training she had four children. She now works part time as a GP, whilst her husband pursues training in his career and her family is young.

Gareth

Faculty: Arts and Humanities

Age when qualified: 51

Degree: Psychology

Award &Level: B.A. 2.1

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)

Educational route: religious school

Initial SEG position:D

Adult SEG position: B

Spouse/partner's SEG position:-

Post degree SEG position: A

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Gareth came from an inland county and completed his first degree in Engineering immediately post Leaving Certificate. He enjoyed his work and the rigor of mathematics associated with engineering. His decision to return to third level education came about from a wish to effect change in his life. He had married a second time and had a young child. He wanted to spend more time with his family and less time working than he had done with previously. He wanted to combine his previous knowledge of the market with an interest in human behaviour so applied and was accepted to study psychology at TCD. He enjoyed his time in college and mixed predominantly with the younger students. He was critical of aspects of the course in Trinity and the position of psychology in Ireland in general. However, he did not regret his decisions as they were fundamental for the new direction that he had planned for his working life. Upon completion of his degree, he continued his education in the Australia by completing a master's degree in organisational psychology. He has returned to Ireland and established a consultancy business and is also studying for an additional counselling qualification.

Fianna

Faculty: Arts and Humanities

Age when qualified: 37

Degree: BESS (Business, Economics and Social Sciences)

Award &Level: B.A. 2.1

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)

Educational route: convent schools (state)

Initial SEG position: E

Adult SEG position: C

Spouse/partner's SEG position: C

Post degree SEG position: C

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Fianna went to primary school and secondary school in her local area. Her parents put a lot of emphasis on education and would put money aside in the event that any of their four children would get into third level. She was the youngest and all her siblings completed their Leaving Certificates but she is the only one to have gone to third level. She was offered a place in university on the basis of her Leaving Certificate results. However, she was not really sure that she wanted to do the course she had chosen and would have felt that the career advice she received in school was very poor. As her father's earnings put them slightly over the ceiling for a grant, her parents asked her to only take the place if she was sure it was the course she wanted. They were willing to pay for her at a later stage when she was certain. Fianna went to secretarial college which she hated and then into office jobs in a trucking company where her father and brother were employed. On the advice of her mother she then moved to an established company, and was an active trade union member. She always had it in the back of her mind to go to college and her experiences within the trade union movement sharpened her interest in areas of social justice and policy. A confluence of events led her to receiving a redundancy package, and this together with free fees facilitated her applying and being accepted into the BESS degree course. Fianna was in a committed relationship and had no children whilst pursuing her degree. She enjoyed her time in college and got on very well with all ages. She made a few good friends with whom she remains in contact. She continued working whilst in college, so had neither the time nor the inclination to get involved in extracurricular activities. Following on from her degree she gained employment in a trade union. She is happy with her current job both in terms of content and remuneration.

Daithi

Faculty: arts and Humanities

Age when qualified: 45 years

Degree: European Studies

Educational Amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)

Education route: religious schools (private)

Initial SEG position: A

Adult SEG position: D

Post degree SEG position: C

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Daithi was born and raised in Dublin city. His father ran a guesthouse in the city and Daithi and his siblings were sent to private schools, Daithi and his brother finally going to a boarding school. Daithi also repeated his Leaving Cert at a private grind school. Daithi believed that his attendance at private schools was a consequence of his father being British and having a sense of the ethos attached to public/private schooling in the UK. In the same vein, they were not encouraged to play with the locals in their inner city area and spent their holidays in the country with relatives. Both parents placed a value on education. He believed that SEG distinction was a feature of life in Ireland, even if less obvious than in the UK with "old boys' network's" operating in the employment market. He enjoyed school and college attendance would have been the expectation within his family and the norm for his school, however he wasn't focused enough to get the appropriate grades to gain entry onto a degree course. He did certificate and diploma courses in areas that interested him and then travelled in Europe teaching English and doing various bar jobs for the next ten years. During this time he got married. Their decision to return to Ireland was prompted by a need to spend time with older members of his family and to get work (then plentiful) in the hospitality industry and teaching English as a foreign language in order to buy an apartment abroad which they would make their home. Having returned to Ireland, a combination of factors, not least the Recession, impacted on and changed their plans. Daithi saw the increasing credentialisation of teaching as something that would severely impact on his earning potential in the future. He completed a return to third level education course and got accepted onto a third level degree programme in Trinity. He chose Trinity partly because of the status attached to the institution. He had

a very busy life as a student, juggling family life, working, and his studies. He purposively didn't identify with mature student groups or hang out solely with mature students. However he was conscious of the age difference and careful that banter would not be misconstrued. During his time in Trinity his child got seriously ill, and he felt that this impacted on his study and energy levels. Upon leaving he went on to do a teaching postgraduate course in another university. Since then he has completed a Masters in International marketing and is now engaged in a marketing course as part of the job bridge scheme. Although he has enjoyed his education part of the reason he remained engaged in it was that he was in the funding loop from the State and if he left it, it would be difficult to get funded at a later stage. He felt that upskilling and credentialisation was the only way in which he could hope to ever get regular employment at some stage.

Sheila

Faculty: Health Sciences
Age when qualified: 50
Degree: B.S.C. Hons Nursing
Award& Level: B.S.C. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Group Certificate
Educational route: convent and vocational schools (state)
Initial SEG: manual labourer
Adult SEG position: D
Spouse/partner's SEG position: B
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Sheila's was born in a working class area of Dublin. She was the sixth child in a family of twelve. Growing up, they were very poor, she had a very low opinion of her father who was a very heavy drinker and violent man who cared little for them. Her mother, however, was very caring and hardworking. Her father was a prolific reader and used to say "if you can read you can learn." He had acquired a diploma in social science which he never used. Instead his brother took it to America and used it as a means to getting a job. Her mother was not formally educated but proud that in her job in a launderette, she wasn't in the laundry room but rather worked with the order books as her grasp of reading, arithmetic and writing was considered to be good. Sheila was the first of her siblings to be allowed to go to secondary school. All before had to leave

and get work as their wages were needed for the home. For the same reason, Sheila left after her group cert. Leaving school before the sixth year was a normal feature of the area she lived in. Sheila enjoyed secondary education far more than primary school, but accepted the fact that she had to leave at the age of fifteen to contribute to the household income. She held various office positions, for shops and multinational companies. She met her husband through work. He was a manual worker, but studied copiously through their marriage, rising to a very high professional level in a multinational company, having to live abroad for some years at a time. As their first child had severe, physical difficulties, Sheila always had to remain in Ireland. Many of the early years of family rearing were taken up with the fight for the rights of her son to attend school and so forth. She also had three other children. She missed 'using her brain' and attended any type of class provided for in her area. It was through happenstance she heard an advertisement on the radio appealing for mature individuals to come forward and apply for nursing qualifications. Based on her experiences with her eldest son, she thought that she would be a suitable candidate. She did not succeed in her first application to nursing college, finding the aptitude tests difficult. In preparation to trying again she completed a pre-nursing course and immersed herself in aptitude test booklets. She was successful the second time around.

She was quite nervous venturing into Trinity itself and academia in general. For the first year she felt like an imposter as she didn't have the 'accent' or the youth which was she regarded as a feature of the institution. However, she grew to love the place, really appreciating the library, and liking the course work. She did not doubt that she chose the right course, appreciating when extra classes were put on for mature students, but noted that they were down to the kindness of particular lecturers rather than as part of the system. She felt more support could have been given to mature students in terms of extra help coping with IT, and also when it came to dealing with critical events that as part of a mature life, intrude on the student role. Socialising in college mainly involved coffee breaks and lunches with two or three mature students whom she still considers good friends. She got on with younger students but actively chose to prioritise her role as mother and so didn't get involved in any societies. She had practical and emotional support from her children and in-laws. Her husband was proud of her, but not particularly supportive.

Following on from college, she got a nursing position in a big teaching hospital in Dublin. By the time of her final year, cracks had appeared in the marriage. She loved her job but her husband was opposed to many aspects of her work and her new found

financial independence. She believes that doing a nursing degree contributed to the dissolution of her marriage, but was not the only factor. She was very glad to have done the course, as she felt that she would not have had the means or the confidence to cope with her marriage break up.

Ned

Faculty: Health Sciences
Age when qualified: 28
Degree: B.S.C. Physiotherapy
Award& Level: B.S.C. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)
Educational route: convent and vocational schools (state)
Initial SEG: B
Adult SEG position: D
Spouse/partner's SEG position: -
Post degree SEG position: B
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Ned was the youngest of four siblings all of whom went on to third level in some form of Health Science and all of whom attended Trinity. From an early age he had wanted to do physiotherapy and having been a committed athlete from an early age reckoned that this gave him an understanding of what physiotherapy was really about. His father had been a plumber but returned to education as a mature student when Ned was born, ending up with a university degree at Master's level in the Science area. Both his parents placed a big emphasis on education. Ned's family moved around a bit when he was growing up, so he had experience of both suburban and rural education, in both the Irish and English language. Ned did not get the necessary points for physiotherapy in his leaving cert, but anticipated this and had an alternative plan. He secured an athletic scholarship to a university in America. In the USA physiotherapy is a postgraduate degree, so he did a pre- physiotherapy as part of a double major degree. His intention on return when his scholarship had ended was to apply for a mature undergraduate position in Ireland. Having applied to a few institutions he was granted an interview by Trinity. A stumbling block was having to pay fees, as he had assumed that as he had no third level qualification in Ireland, he was entitled to a third level "free fees" degree course. He was able to do so through a combination of past earnings and assistance from his parents. In his second year he was awarded a

scholarship which was a great help financially and in terms of a friendship network. He found the course work easy for the most part, especially given the content of his previous degree. He socialised mainly with those on his course, both mature and younger students. He felt that his continuity of time in education, his mother's occasional jobs in Trinity and his siblings' attendance at Trinity, greatly facilitated his time at college. He also had an understanding of the mature student process from his father's experience. Upon graduating work was hard to find, he worked in a clerical capacity in an office and then applied for and was successful in getting accepted for a PhD candidateship. He is currently in the final year of this and is happy with the way life has turned out so far.

Harry

Faculty: Health Sciences
Age when qualified: 29
Degree: B.S.C. B.Dent.Science
Award& Level: 1st
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)
Educational route: State schools
Initial SEG: A
Adult SEG position: C
Spouse/partner's SEG position:-
Post degree SEG position: B
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Harry came from a family of six. His father was in the Gardai and Harry's abiding memories are of a happy childhood, but one where money was always lacking, to the extent that they often didn't have enough food in the house for the family. His early family years were spent in Dublin followed by a move to a country area. He was happy in his schools both in Dublin and in the country. When he began secondary school his father took him aside and told him that it was very important that he worked hard in school as there "was nothing for him here". Harry took that to mean that they had no land to farm or family business to enter and that any opportunity that he could have to get on in life would emanate from his own efforts at school. He had a summer job helping a neighbour on his smallholding. Oftentimes the neighbour would have him home for supper when the day's work would be finished. This elderly farmer lived with his more elderly mother on an isolated farm with little opportunity for company or

conviviality. Although he loved the peace and nature of the area, his father's advice and the life he saw this neighbour living, convenience him to study hard at school. He had determined to be a dentist, as he saw this as a way to live comfortably. He did not want to be rich, but didn't want to have to worry about being able to pay bills, buy a house, food or support a family. He did not get sufficient points to do dentistry, and had put primary teaching down as a second choice, as directed by his mother. Although he knew from the start that he didn't really want to be a teacher, he felt that he let himself be persuaded into the course, as his mother talked of a having a great pensionable job and good holidays. Upon qualifying he secured a permanent job but still wanted to study dentistry. In part he saw the future of teaching as being very monotonous and having little autonomy as a teacher. Having waited to be the age for mature application, he applied, was interviewed and accepted on to the course. He then suffered serious ill health, necessitating hospitalisation and critical operations on two separate occasions in first year. He found the administration and academic staff in his School unhelpful regarding his situation, suggesting that he consider leaving the course. That year he got very high marks in his exams. He paid for his tuition by doing substitute teaching in primary schools throughout his studies. He enjoyed the work, made some friends, but found that the School was apart from the rest of Trinity and that there was little interaction with students from other Faculties. Since qualifying he has continued his studies with professional courses both in Ireland and abroad. He gets some regular part time work in dentists' surgeries, but has to hand over up to 60% of his earnings to the resident dentist of the practise. He is heavily in debt and depressed about this. He enjoys dentistry but feels that if he had remained in teaching he would be far better off financially, have a pension plan, a house and possibly a family, none of which he can see himself doing in the foreseeable future.

Kevin Q

Faculty: Maths, Engineering and Science

Age when qualified: 34

Degree: B.A. (MOD) Computer Science

Award& Level: B.A 2.2

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: State secondary final

Educational route: State schools

Initial SEG: D

Adult SEG position: D

Spouse/partner's SEG position: D
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Kevin is a Chinese national born and reared in the Northern provinces of China. He was a middle child of three. His parents did not have any third level qualifications; his father ran a government hardware shop. His schooling was consistent with that of his peers in what was offered by the State. His primary schooling was local and then his secondary equivalent was in a boarding school. The focus on academia was quite intense. He acknowledges that he did not put in the effort necessary to gain entry to a good degree course, instead doing a diploma level course in computer science. From there followed a series of jobs which were not particularly satisfying. It was always on his mind to return to academia and pursue his education to degree level. With his wife he perused the options available with a Chinese education broker. Across all markers in the broker's tables, Ireland was highly rated in terms of access and employability, and Trinity in terms of world rankings. On moving over to Ireland both himself and his wife got jobs in the service industry, Kevin eventually, through contacts getting work in groundkeeping in Trinity. Eventually he interviewed for and got a place on a computer science degree in Trinity College. During his time on the degree course he juggled his job, his studies and care of his firstborn with his wife who was also working in the service industry and studying in Trinity. Upon finishing his degree he completed a Masters and gained work for a large firm. He found the process exhausting but saw no other option. He is relatively happy with his present work placement as he can work from home or the office and this facilitates afterschool childcare within the home. However, he is less happy with the financial recompense.

<u>Seansher</u>
Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 36
Degree: BESS (Business, Economics and Social Sciences)
Award &Level: B.A. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate
Educational route: religious schools (state)
Initial SEG position: E

Adult SEG position: Unemployed
Spouse/partner's SEG position: n/a
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Seansher grew up in a disadvantaged area of Dublin where it would have been unusual for students to progress to college. He was the eldest of nine, and his home life was blighted by a tyrannical father who was not supportive of his wife or children. He attempted his leaving certificate twice but failed. He credited his mother as a source of encouragement and support in his endeavours but would have said she was intimidated by his father. After he failed his leaving certificate, his self confidence was very low. He was unemployed for ten years, but in that time would have written plays and poetry as a way of expressing himself and channelling his feelings. It was the death of an uncle that led him to question his life and seek to change direction. He always had it in the back of his mind to further his education, he felt he had a "burning intelligence" but he he had not been sure as to the process. He got in touch with a local resource centre. He completed a year long course in social care which formed the start of his educational journey. A guidance counsellor told him about TAP, he applied and was accepted. Following on from TAP he completed a degree in Business, Economics and Social Studies (BESS). He was not in a permanent relationship and had no children whilst pursuing his degree. He retained a strong allegiance to the TAP organisation and his friendships and socialising took part mainly in this milieu. After his primary degree, he completed a master's degree in social research. He got some administrative and teaching temporary jobs. He is very happy (both with the job content and remuneration) with his current job working with reintegrating homeless young adults into society.

Ray
Faculty: School of Nursing
Age when qualified: 43
Degree: BESS (Business, Economics and Social Sciences)
Award &Level: B.Sc. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: - O level
Educational route: State schools
Initial SEG position: A

Adult SEG position: C

Spouse/partner's SEG position: C

Post degree SEG position: B

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Ray was born, and educated in Wales. He worked as a care assistant in a school for people with disabilities for a year and from that decided to specialise in disability nursing. He had been advised in school to apply for nursing but had not done so. His parents were supportive, but thought it a bit 'low end' and would have preferred him to pursue another avenue in nursing. After qualifying he moved over to work in Ireland, got married and raised a family here. Over time he found the structure and strictures placed on him as a disability nurse to be very frustrating and embarked on a course of self education which included self development. This aided his understanding of self, and helped him to be aware and ready for opportunities for advancement. This came in a venture to professionalise nursing promoted by the Commission on Nursing (Ireland). This one year degree course worked on a time release principle (earn and learn) whereby the individual was able to continue working with a day/days release to attend lectures. His children at the time ranged from seven to twelve years of age. He enjoyed his time on the course and used it as a springboard to continue as a tutor in the nursing profession. He is currently employed on the academic staff of a third level institution.

<u>Marymau</u>

Faculty: Science, Engineering and Mathematics

Age when qualified: 64

Degree: Science

Award &Level: B.A. (3 year degree) 2.2

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate

Educational route: convent schools (state and private)

Initial SEG position: D

Adult SEG position: C

Spouse/partner's SEG position: C

Post degree SEG position: Unemployed & Retired

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Downwards (in terms of wanting to work)

Marymau was retired from teaching and all her children were reared before she came to college. Marymau had always been academic and interested in Science from a very

early age. She credits her grandmother for engendering curiosity in her for the scientific arena and for life in general. Her life had been difficult in both professional and personal terms. When she retired from teaching she decided to re-commence studying in the area that she had always been interested in. On the advice of her children she tried to prepare herself for college. She took courses in Science through an online university. She was only interested in doing Science and only in Trinity College. She struggled with certain aspects of the course and excelled at others. The conclusion of a protracted and bitter divorce case impacted on her studies. She eventually accepted a pass degree after three years but feels the advice from her personal tutor was flawed. During her time in college she enjoyed the company of mainly younger students. She had also hoped to get some work, part-time or on a voluntary basis in the Science field but was not successful. She had intended to return and complete at honours level at some stage but her health is not good.

Anthony

Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 48
Degree: TSM (History and History of Art)
Award &Level: B.A.
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate
Educational route: religious schools (state)
Initial SEG position: G
Adult SEG position: F
Spouse/partner's SEG position: n/a
Post degree SEG position: D
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwards

Anthony went to primary and secondary school in Kerry. He was bullied (both by teachers and other students) and very unhappy at school to the extent that he suffered psychologically and needed medical attention. He was not happy in his home life either, thinking his mother to be mentally unstable. He struggled academically throughout his school career and failed his leaving certificate examination. He came to Dublin as a young adult and got interested in Art History as part of a rehabilitation exercise. This led to work as a research assistant on a specific local architectural project. The quality of his work brought him to the attention of certain individuals of

repute within the Trinity arena, who strongly encouraged him to apply for a position on the Art History course in Trinity. He did not succeed initially, but succeeded on his next attempt and studied Art History in TCD. Prior to these two attempts he had on other occasions made application to third level but had not been successful. He was single and had no children during his time in TCD. He did not make many friends in the student college population, nor find it easy to engage in casual banter, however he did join the photographic society and found this to be an enjoyable social outlet. Subsequently he went on to master's level and doctorate qualifications. He has found it difficult to get work in his field and credits this in part to his mental health issues.

Rita

Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 54
Degree: Sociology and Social policy
Award level: B.A. 2.2
Education amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate
Educational route: convent and non religious schools (private and state)
Initial SEG position: A
Adult SEG position: C
Spouse/partner's SEG position: n/a
Post degree SEG position: -
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Downward mobility

Rita was the middle child of three born and reared in Dublin attending local schools. Her father was Irish and her mother was Swedish. Her father was a commercial artist who set up a very successful business in an associated field. She would have described her home life as creative. On her father's untimely death when she was young her mother assumed an administrative position in the company. Money was not plentiful, so college was not an option that she considered open to her upon completion of the secondary cycle. After a spell as an au pair she completed a course at a private fashion academy. In subsequent years she got work in Arts administration both here and in the UK. She enjoyed her work greatly. The need to help her mother through a period of illness and the relocation of a company she worked for, prompted her to resign her position and look for other work. Despite her successful track record she found it hard to obtain work, and believed this was due to not getting through the "weeding out" process as she did not have a degree. She chose a degree which would build on the

skills she already had and equip her for a more varied future. She also wanted to experience college life and escape for a while from the drudge of job hunting and short term contracts. She enjoyed the congeniality in college of both mature and traditional students, noting that those younger students who came from middle class backgrounds were more accepting of older students. However she felt that in the main she choose to focus on her friendship ties outside college and the company of a few close mature students within college for sociability. She had some difficulty with the formal business of being a student in terms of essay formation and so forth and although she availed of the support of student learning it took her some time to arrive at a learning style that suited her. Aspects of her personal life caused some difficulty to her confidence and ability and overall it took her six years to complete her degree. She believed that Trinity operated like a well oiled machine with solutions of some sort available for problems ranging from academic to personal. Since leaving college she has applied for many jobs but without success. At present she is working without pay at a senior level in the voluntary sector, but is hopeful of getting paid work somewhere at sometime. The main value to her of having a third level qualification is having "the piece of paper" signifying degree status.

<u>Greta</u>
Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 57
Degree: TSM (Language and Sociology)
Award &Level: B.A. 1.
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate
Educational route: State and private schools.
Initial SEG position: C
Adult SEG position: C
Spouse/partner's SEG position: B
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Greta went to school in Dublin. She enjoyed the social aspect of school immensely and would still have school friends from the age of four. After completing her leaving certificate, it would have been the norm for her contemporaries to do commercial/secretarial courses as a stopgap to marriage. At the time (early sixties) girls weren't particularly encouraged to go to university and, she noted, similarly to

Maisie, that there were many courses required for third level that would not be available to females. Her parents would have regarded education as important. Post leaving certificate she spent a year working in a school abroad, and subsequently became a lab technician as she didn't want to do office work. After marriage and when her children were young she worked as a locum. Her husband developed a severe illness, and her life revolved around helping care for him and his private medical practise. The death of her husband gave her time to reflect on her future. A talk she attended in a local library and an awareness of the free fees scheme led her to consider undertaking a degree. She did a return to learning course and subsequently chose Trinity for her degree course (primarily because it was a four year course) in a language and Sociology. Her children were finishing and finished college when she was in Trinity. She felt that she enjoyed her time in college to her full potential while not ignoring her life outside college. She commented on the convenience of Trinity and her student status on engaging in wider activities such as theatre attendance. Following on she completed a master's degree in social research and from this course found employment in an office management position.

<u>Tara</u>
Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 48
Degree: Sociology and Social Policy
Award &Level: B.A. 2.1
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Intermediate Certificate
Educational route: State school
Initial SEG position: Z
Adult SEG position:-
Spouse/partner's SEG position: -
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upwardly mobile

Tara grew up in and went to school in a working class of Dublin. There was no emphasis on education in her area, and she didn't think that they would have known anyone with a degree when she was younger. She regarded her father as a clever man who was well read and able to back up his arguments with statistics. As a married

woman she was a committed community activist, fighting for courses and education in her area for both children and women. Her progression into third level came about though her community involvement. She had got a grant for computers for the local community centre and no one knew how to use them. She decided to do a course on computers herself but had to do it as part of a broader package. From this she completed her Leaving Certificate and a guidance counsellor told her about TAP. Having been accepted on TAP, she continued on to do a degree in Sociology and Social Policy. She was married and had five children at this time ranging in age from 4 to 18 years of age. She enjoyed her time at Trinity College but felt it was very much geared towards younger middle class students. She also felt that it was exemplar of top down learning and did not pay cognisance to the lived experience of the student body. Upon qualification, she did consider continuing on to complete a master's degree but felt "burnt out." Through ancillary networks she got employment as a teacher in the vocational and educational sphere. She is happy with both the content and remuneration of her work and in addition continues her work as a community activist.

<u>Tash</u>

Faculty: Arts and Humanities
Age when qualified: 42
Degree: Geography
Award &Level: B.A. 2.1.
Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Intermediate certificate
Educational route: State school
Initial SEG position: E
Adult SEG position: D
Spouse/partner's SEG position: F
Post degree SEG position: C
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Upward mobility

Tash was born and raised in a working class area of Dublin. She would have left school after her intermediate certificate, which she considered normal for the area. After school she did a local secretarial course, following from which she got a job in a factory. In response to her mother's urgings she applied for an office job with a shipping company in the docks. An office job would have been considered a 'step up' socially. She continued in office work with various firms up to and after her marriage but gave up paid work when her children came along. Once her youngest started

playschool she began doing courses that were being held for parents in local schools. These encompassed a vast array of topics. She got involved in literacy courses, and was taken aback by the level of illiteracy that existed in her community. Her academic education evolved through doing a course to become a tutor with NALA, then teaching herself computer studies in the library, and then did a back to education course in a local centre to build on her computer knowledge. Similarly to Trish, in order to do the computer skills section you had to participate in other subjects. Whilst attending this course she heard about TAP and went to an open day. She was accepted and from there got a place to study Geography at TCD. Throughout her journey along the route she had been focused on up skilling herself for the job market. However, it was due to advice from a tutor on TAP that she decided to focus on doing something she enjoyed rather than necessarily being work focused. She was married with children when she was in TCD. Her husband passed away during her studies. She enjoyed her time in Trinity as she had a great love for her subject. She socialised with the TAP students as well as in the mature society, and also got on well with younger students. She had mixed support from her family, her husband being very supportive and others in her family of origin feeling that it would be better if she had gone straight into the job market. She successfully continued her studies on to PhD level and then gained employment in an administrative section of an academic unit in a third level institution. Although she enjoys a great deal of autonomy in her work and is happy with her remuneration, she sometimes feel that she is still doing the same sort of work that she did before coming back to college initially.

Martha

Faculty: Arts and Humanities

Age when qualified: 70

Degree: Irish

Award &Level: B.A. 2.1.

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Intermediate certificate (c)

Educational route: convent school (state)

Initial SEG position: I

Adult SEG position: C
Spouse/partner's SEG position: N/A
Post degree SEG position: Retired
Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Martha came from an island off the north coast of Ireland. Her mother would have been particularly interested in education and wanted all her children to try out for scholarships for university. Martha however, felt that if staying on and going to college would mean that you were ancient by the time you were finished in education. She elected to leave after her intermediate certificate and go on to a rural education school where you learned domestic economy. She focused on agriculture and became a poultry advisor. Her working life was spent in the civil service with one career break to go and work abroad advising on agriculture. She worked in various civil service departments prior to retirement. During her working life she would have done various certificate and diploma courses but retired, and having free time, she decided to attempt a degree course. She chose Trinity both because of its city centre convenience and the quality of certain aspects of the old Irish course. She was used to the company of young people having had many nieces and nephews stay with her and from her working environment in the civil service. Although she did socialise with the younger students on her course, most of her socialising took the form of having tea breaks with mature students from other course. She enjoyed activities organised by the mature society and went to a few debates organised by the Philosophical society and independent lectures organised by her own department. She studied hard and availed of help from the student learning centre but was aware of a difference in her manner of studying and that of younger students. She felt that there was a system that they would have been inculcated in at school which stood to them in college, which older students were not privy to. Upon completion of her degree she had been asked to do some work with students in the department but then was told that this was not possible due to her age (over 65) even though lecturers could work until they were 70 years of age. She meets up with college friends from time to time and feels that the whole venture was very worthwhile. She has a few personal research interests that she is involved with, and helps lecturers informally from time to time. She is also involved in researching for and contributing to a museum in the north of Ireland.

Mildred

Faculty: Arts and Humanities

Age when qualified:

Degree: History

Award &Level: B.A. 2.2.

Educational amount on leaving secondary school: Leaving Certificate (c)

Educational route: convent schools (state and private)

Initial SEG position: A

Adult SEG position: C

Spouse/partner's SEG position: n/a

Post degree SEG position: Retired

Personal mobility direction (Pre-Post degree): Non mobile

Mildred grew up in the west of Ireland and went to primary and secondary school in her local area. She spoke highly of the education that she received. Upon completion of her leaving certificate she got a job in the public service and moved to Dublin where she worked in various departments until retiring. She wanted a challenge and was keen to do a degree rather than a diploma. In college she gravitated towards the company of older students although she found the younger students quite friendly. However, she limited her social involvement generally to tea breaks and attending the occasional mature society event, as she found the work quite demanding. Overall she was delighted to have the opportunity to do something that she could not have committed to during her working life. She continued on to do a master's degree in history and attends history lectures held in Trinity and various other institutions.