

Bringing Higher Education into the Family Home?

A Case Study Examination of Liquid Education Effects, as First-
Generation Parents and their Children attend Higher Education
Concurrently.

Ph.D.

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Abstract

PhD Thesis title: Bringing Higher Education into the Family Home?: A Case Study Examination of Liquid Education Effects, As First-Generation Parents and Their Children Attend Higher Education Concurrently.

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One assumption within higher education practice, policy and research, is that higher education is an individualised transition and experience, where students are atomised from their familial contexts. This research uncovers a collective higher education experience for first generation students and their families. The overarching research question was “What are the experiences of first-generation families with an intergenerational dyadic pair, engaging in higher education?” There was a phenomenon observed in higher education, where first generation parents and their children were studying at the same time. My original contribution to knowledge lies in the examination of the effects that the dyadic pairs experiences in higher education exerted on the family, utilising the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) a topic previously largely unexplored in academic higher education research.

A multiple case study approach was taken combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. A quantitative study was employed to identify the participants and five families were identified. Secondly, their qualitative experiences were captured through educational biographies, individual interviews and family focus groups over a two year period. Sitting in the shadows of higher education experiences are the family members who are not engaging in Higher education. This research captured their voices, of children, siblings and partners of the dyadic pairs. Berger and Luckmann (1966) was the theoretical framework employed for this research, it was embedded within the research process, applied to the findings and employed in the discussion. The theoretical frame served to focus the research on language, socialisation, roles and relationships.

The family’s role in higher education has been underestimated in research, policy and practice historically. The dyadic pair bring their higher education experiences into the family home; these liquid higher education effects leave no one in the family untouched. The pre-higher education ‘taken for granted reality’ of the home was thrown into crises; the language in the family home changed resulting in new norms around communication. A seven-step process to higher education language acquisition for first generation students was identified. Roles within the home went through a three-stage process of change, from role conflict to role re-negotiation to role transformation, which ultimately led in the majority of families, to a more egalitarian household. The non-higher education family members were socialized into higher education as the dyadic pair brought home books, language and knowledge, changing the very fabric of the family home. The liquid higher education effects set new norms around HE participation. One way educational values were transmitted in the family was through repetitive conversations in the home about the value of education. The findings also revealed the enduring importance of relationships in the family home and examined the shifts in relationship power dynamics due to knowledge acquisition in higher education. The experience brought siblings closer together, children became more independent, increased parental conflict and resulted in a fundamental shift in all familial relationships. These shifts in familial relationships necessitated the family activating its mycorrhizal role, to survive the liquid higher education effects experienced in the home.

The research findings suggest that the family occupies the ‘in-between space’ between the individual and the higher education institution. The dyadic pair are ‘the carriers’ of higher education knowledge and language. This research locates the mycorrhizal role played by the family; the dyadic pairs are not alone in their higher education pursuits. They are enmeshed in a web of relations and the family redirects support to them in order for the individuals and family to survive the Higher education experience. This may explain why there was evidence of collective familial transformations occurring and not solely transformations at an individual level. The family was the ‘safe harbour’ for the dyadic pairs, they were anchored to it and it served the purpose of re-affirming the new higher education reality. Higher education institutions are educating families and the family must also endure higher education. Higher education institutions must utilize their superpower, *families* and acknowledge the mycorrhizal role they play, engage them in their family members learning, prepare and support first generation learners as a collective entity rather than as individuals replete of familial ties. Higher education institutions must acknowledge that the family is continually imbricated into the lived experiences of individual students.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the Library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Pamela Kelly

Date: 22-12-2025

Summary

This research examines the following question:

“What are the experiences of first-generation families with an intergenerational dyadic pair, engaging in higher education?”

It has been presumed that the higher education journey is isolated and you are atomized as you learn, individually. This research examines this assumption and engages with families where there is a dyadic pair, a parent and their child in higher education concurrently. The original contribution to knowledge for this research is an examination of first-generation, intergenerational dyadic pairs from the same family engaging in Higher education, they have not been researched in Ireland previously, nor have they been examined employing the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann 1966.

This research employed a multi-case study approach and integrated both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Initially a quantitative survey was undertaken to recruit participants for the research; this resulted in the recruitment of five families. Subsequently the qualitative methods were employed were individual biographies, individual interviews and family focus groups. An often-overlooked group of participants in higher education, the non-higher education family member's partook in the family focus groups. The research was grounded in the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) which was incorporated into the methodology analysis and discussion. This theoretical lens guided the research to consider language, roles, relationships and socialisation processes at play.

Two metaphors were employed to assist in the interpretation of the findings along with the theoretical frame, they were liquid education and the mycorrhizal role. Liquid education examined how higher education came into the home and the mycorrhizal role explored how the family navigated the liquid education effects. The family was the 'safe harbour' for the dyadic pairs they were anchored to it and it served the purpose of re-affirming the new higher education reality.

A seven-step process to higher education language acquisition for first generation students was tentatively identified. Roles within the home went through a three-stage process of change, from role conflict to role re-negotiation to role transformation, which ultimately led in the majority of families, to a more egalitarian household. The non-higher education family members (Non-HE) were socialized into higher education as the dyadic pair brought home books, language and knowledge, changing the very fabric of the family home. The research highlighted the significance of family bonds in the higher education process, explained how the increase in knowledge shifted the power dynamics in the home, siblings grew closer, children gained independence, parental conflicts were rife, and all family relationships and roles changed as a result. There was also tentative evidence of collective familial transformations occurring and not solely transformations at an individual level. Higher education institutions are educating families and liquid education flows into the home.

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I dedicate this thesis to my husband Stuart Halligan and my two wonderful boys Sonny Halligan and Jesse Halligan. You mean the world to me and this Ph.D. has been for you. This Ph.D. has taken time to complete because I never once put it first, you were both my number one and will always be, thanks for your patience. Sonny and Jesse, I hope this PhD will teach you that hard work and not giving up means you can achieve your dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	11

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	13

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	14

1.1 INTRODUCTION	14
1.2 THE ORIGINS OF THE THESIS	14
1.3 THE CONTEXT - LAY OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION LAND- INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY ...	16
1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	20
1.5 LIQUID EDUCATION	23
1.6 'IT IS NOT ALWAYS ABOUT ME' THE DYADIC PAIR, THE COLLECTIVE AND THE LIMINAL.....	24
1.7 GENDER	28
1.8 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	29
1.9 OVERVIEW- THE SPINE OF THE THESIS AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE.....	30
CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE.....	31
CONCLUSION.....	32

CHAPTER 2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW	33

2.1 INTRODUCTION	33
2.2 SECTION 1: THE "HOW" OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW	34
2.3 SECTION 2: HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY CONTEXT	36
2.3.1 INTRODUCTION	36
A PAUSE! WHY SHOULD FAMILIES BE INCLUDED IN HE POLICIES?	52
THE FAMILY IN IRELAND: PART RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCT AND PART PANDORA'S BOX.	54
CONCLUSION.....	57

CHAPTER 3 THE LITERATURE REVIEW: PART 1 -THE FAMILY AND HIGHER EDUCATION	58

3.1 INTRODUCTION	58
3.2 FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS (FGS)	59
3.2.1 TERMINOLOGY	59
3.2.2 THE FGS EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION	60
3.2.3 BARRIERS FOR FGS	61
3.3 THE TRANSITION	64
3.3.1 THE LINGUISTIC	65
3.3.2 THE GEOGRAPHIC	71
3.3.3 THE IN-BETWEEN	74
3.4 THEORETICAL INSIGHTS	79
3.4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THEORETICAL INSIGHTS	79
3.4.2 THE BOURDIEU EFFECT	80
3.4.3 FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE	83
3.4.4 FAMILY CAPITAL THEORY AND FAMILIAL SUPPORT	85
CONCLUSION.....	88

CHAPTER 4 LITERATURE REVIEW: PART 2-THE FAMILY AND HIGHER EDUCATION	89
4.1 INTRODUCTION	89
4.2 RELATIONSHIPS AND HIGHER EDUCATION.....	89
4.2.1 PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS AND HIGHER EDUCATION.....	89
4.2.2 PARENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THEIR CHILDREN	93
4.2.3 SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS AND HIGHER EDUCATION	97
4.2.4 EXTENDED FAMILY SUPPORT AND RELATIONSHIPS	98
4.3 IDENTITY, ROLES AND HIGHER EDUCATION.....	100
4.3.1 VIRTUAL HANDBAGS- INVISIBLE FAMILY LIFE AND RECOGNITION	109
4.4 TRANSFORMATIONS	111
CONCLUSION.....	114
 CHAPTER 5 – THEORETICAL LENS.....	 115
5.1 INTRODUCTION	115
5.2 PHENOMENOLOGY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH BERGER & LUCKMANN (1966)	117
5.3 THE FOUNDATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE IN EVERYDAY LIFE	120
5.3.1. REALITY AND FINITE PROVINCES OF MEANING	120
5.3.2. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE	122
5.3.3. SEMANTIC FIELDS	123
5.3.4. THE SOCIAL STOCK OF KNOWLEDGE	124
5.3.5. RELEVANCE STRUCTURES.....	124
5.4. SOCIETY AS OBJECTIVE REALITY.....	126
5.4.1 INSTITUTIONALIZATION.....	126
5.4.2 LEGITIMATION AND SYMBOLIC UNIVERSES.....	129
5.5 SOCIETY AS SUBJECTIVE REALITY.....	132
5.5.1 INTERNALIZATION OF REALITY.....	132
5.5.2 INTERNALIZATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE.....	142
5.6. CRITICAL REFLECTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS	143
CONCLUSION.....	149
 CHAPTER 6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	 151
6.1 INTRODUCTION	151
6.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS	151
6.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	157
6.3.1 ONTOLOGY	158
6.3.2 EPISTEMOLOGY.....	159
6.3.3 THEORETICAL LENS.....	160
6.5 THE CASE STUDY	161
6.6 CHRONOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND FOUR STAGES	163
6.6.1 STAGE 1 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	164
6.6.2 STAGE 2 QUESTIONNAIRE AND SAMPLING STRATEGY	166
CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION IN THE RESEARCH	167
6.6.3 STAGE 3: THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS- RESEARCH METHODS	168
6.6.4 STAGE 4 ANALYSIS.....	177
6.7 ESTABLISHING TRUSTWORTHINESS	190

6.8 REFLEXIVITY – POWER AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	192
CONCLUSION.....	195

CHAPTER 7 THE FINDINGS: FAMILY VIGNETTES 196

7.1 INTRODUCTION	196
7.2 FAMILY VIGNETTES	197
FAMILY 1 - THE HALLIGANS	197
FAMILY 2 – THE EMUGAS.....	201
FAMILY 3 – THE LATCHFORDS	203
FAMILY 4 – THE GREENES	206
FAMILY 5- THE MORGANS	209
CONCLUSION.....	212

CHAPTER 8 FINDINGS: RELATIONSHIPS AND ROLES 213

8.1 INTRODUCTION	213
8.2 RELATIONSHIPS	213
8.2.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DYADIC PAIRS.....	213
8.2.2 PARENTAL RELATIONSHIP	216
8.2.3 MOTHERS AND FATHER’S RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-HE CHILDREN	218
8.2.4 SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS	220
8.2.5 PEER RELATIONSHIPS	221
8.3 ROLES	224
8.3.1 ROLE CONFLICT STAGE 1.....	224
8.3.2 ROLE RE-NEGOTIATION STAGE 2.....	228
8.3.3 ROLE TRANSFORMATIONS STAGE 3.....	229
CONCLUSION.....	231

CHAPTER 9 FINDINGS: SOCIALISATION, LIQUID EDUCATION, COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONS AND LANGUAGE 233

9.1 INTRODUCTION	233
9.2 EDUCATION SOCIALIZATION - FAMILY EDUCATIONAL VALUES	233
9.2.1 “THE COOKBOOKS HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH SOCIOLOGY BOOKS! YEAH”	237
9.3 LIQUID HE	239
9.3.1 INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING BETWEEN THE DYADIC PAIRS	239
9.3.2 HE IN THE FAMILY HOME.....	242
9.3.3 SIBLING IMPACT	245
9.3.4 EXTENDED FAMILY AND HE	246
9.4 COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONS	249
9.5 LANGUAGE.....	251
9.5.1 HE LANGUAGE AND THE FAMILY (HOME) COLLECTIVE.....	251
CONCLUSION.....	255

CHAPTER 10 DISCUSSION- LIQUID EDUCATION AND THE MYCORRHIZAL.....257

10.1 INTRODUCTION	257
10.2 LIQUID EDUCATION FLOWED IN	258
10.2.1 LIQUID EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY HOME.....	259
10.2.2 SOCIALISATION-FAMILY EDUCATIONAL VALUES	261
10.2.3 LANGUAGE.....	265
10.3 MYCORRHIZAL ROLE ACTIVATED	273
10.3.1 DIFFICULTY “LETTING GO”.	278
10.3.2 THE NON-HE CHILDREN	278
10.3.3 STAGES IN THE ROLE RE-SOCIALISATION PROCESS.....	280
10.4 DISRUPTION TO THE REALITY OF EVERYDAY FAMILY LIFE	283
10.5 COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONS	287
CONCLUSION.....	290

CHAPTER 11 CONCLUSION 292

11.1 INTRODUCTION	292
11.2 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	292
11.3 A RETURN TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	294
11.3.1 QUESTION 1.....	295
11.3.2 QUESTION 2.....	296
11.3.3 QUESTION 3:.....	297
11.3.4 QUESTION 4:.....	298
11.3.5 QUESTION 5:.....	299
11.4 THE THEORETICAL FRAME.....	300
11.5 EXTENDIBILITY -IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS ON THE MICRO, MESO AND MACRO.....	303
11.5.1 MICRO-PRACTICE.....	304
11.5.2 MESO- INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL	304
11.5.3 MACRO- POLICY LEVEL	305
11.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	306
11.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	307
11.8 A REFLEXIVE LETTER TO MY GRANDPARENTS ABOUT MY PHD JOURNEY	308
11.9 TO CONCLUDE WITH HOGGART AND HEANEY.....	309

REFERENCES 312

A.....	312
B.....	315
C.....	321
D.....	325
E.....	327
F.....	329
G.....	332
H.....	335
I.....	340
J.....	340
K.....	341

L	343
M.....	345
N.....	350
O	351
P.....	352
Q	354
R.....	354
S	356
T	360
V.....	361
W.....	362
Y	364
Z	365

APPENDICES.....366

APPENDIX A CHRONOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF PERTINENT HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY.....	366
APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE	368
APPENDIX C TIMELINE OF RESEARCH PROCESS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	376
APPENDIX D ETHICAL APPROVAL 1	378
ETHICAL APPROVAL 2	379
APPENDIX E PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND RESEARCH INFORMATION	380
APPENDIX F INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL BIOGRAPHY QUESTIONS GUIDE.....	384
APPENDIX G INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW – QUESTIONS	386
APPENDIX H FAMILY FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS TOPICS TO DISCUSS.....	389
APPENDIX I- 15 POINT CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA FOR GOOD THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	392

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. 1 Socio-economic profile of HEI student populations (HEA 2020).....	18
Figure 1. 2 Social Impact Assessment Series Student Grant Scheme (SUSI Grants) DEPER, 2020.....	19
Figure 1. 3 Rachel Whiteread, Untitled (Domestic) (2002)(In-Between space cast the staircase)	27
Fig 2. 1 Search Terms employed in the research process	35
Fig 2. 2 GUI 2020 Young People and Career Decisions	54
Fig 3. 1 DEPER: Social Impact assessment series, student grant scheme (SUSI) Phulphagar & Kane, 2020, p.10	63
Fig 3. 2 HEA 2021b Survey of Barriers to participation in HE.....	64
Fig 3. 3 Cumulative Language experiences (Hart & Risley, 2003, p. 116)	66
Fig 3. 4 Model of Family Capital (Webber, 2017, p. 415)	86
Fig 4. 1 Cycle of Transformation for husbands (Webber, 2015, p.224).....	92
Fig 4. 2 Mothers expectation of child's education by mothers own education level (GUI 2009)	94
Fig 4. 3 Books in the home by Mother education (GUI, 2009).....	94
Fig 5. 1 Chapter 5 -Theoretical lens overview	115
Fig 5. 2 Origins of Phenomenology.....	117
Fig 6. 1 Chronology of the Research Process.....	163
Fig 6. 2 The Literature Review	164
Fig 6. 3 Literature review search process.....	165
Fig 6. 4 Family Focus Groups	175
Fig 6. 5 Transcripts hand coded	182
Fig 6. 6 Long List of Codes per participant.....	184
Fig 6. 7 Phase 4 Reviewing the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	185
Fig 6. 8 Phase 5 Map by colour Code (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	186
Fig 6. 9 Liquid Education	189
Fig 6. 10 ESAI Conference 2019.....	192
Fig 10. 1 Locating the Liminal- Liquid Education	257
Fig 10. 2 Liquid Education Properties, Dependents and impact	259
Fig 10. 3 The Family, the mycorrhizal role and the liquid education effects.....	273
Fig 10. 4 Stages in the Role Transformation Process within Families.....	280

List of Tables

Table 1 Collective focused Research Questions (Above)	154
Table 2 Individually Focused Questions (Above).....	157
Table 3 Research Framework Adapted from (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109)	157
Table 4 Timeline of Ethical Approval	163
Table 5. Criteria for inclusion in the research	167
Table 6 Pre and post pilot methods.....	169
Table 7. Types of Interview Questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008 as cited in Knott et al.,2022, p.4)	172
Table 8. Coding process and Key.....	178
Table 9 Table of Participants	181
Table 10 Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)	183
Table 11 Relationship Theme and associated sub-themes	187
Table 12 Finalised Thematic Map.....	188
Table 13. Aspects to Reflect on Reflexivity (Knott, et al., 2022, p.6).....	193
Table 14 Main Summary of Findings Chapter 8	232
Table 15 Main Summary of Findings Chapter 9	256
Table 16. Language acquisition Process.....	270

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FG	First Generation
FGF	First Generation Family
FGS	First Generation Student
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IOT	Institute of Technology
LE	Liquid Education
LLL	Life Long Learning
MR	Mycorrhizal Role
NON- HE	Non higher education participant
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RTC	Regional Technical Colleges
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
TU	Technological University
WP	Widening Participation

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin with “The origins of the thesis” which explains the background to the research and research question: *“What are the experiences of first generation families with an intergenerational dyadic pair, engaging in higher education?”* and situates it within a personal context as an educator at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, now commonly referred to as TU Dublin, Blanchardstown Campus (Section 1.2). The next section 1.3, The Context - Lay of the Higher Education Land- Institutes of Technology will give a brief introduction to the higher education landscape, while also briefly discussing the dynamic nature of this space. The overarching research question will be discussed along with the respective sub-questions and a rationale provided for the focus of the research. Then “The Dyadic Pair, the Collective and the Liminal” will be introduced. This is important as the research focuses on parents and their children (the dyadic pair) as first generation students (FGS) in higher education, who are at the same time, a first-generation family (FGF). There will be an examination of the liquid education metaphor and its use in the research. Then a brief explanation of the ‘in-between’ the liminal space and its potential implications for the interpretation and framing of the research findings will be presented. This will follow with a short note about gender and that while it was not specifically asked as a research question, or employed as a theoretical perspective, gender permeates all aspects of the research process. Lastly, I will introduce the “Theoretical perspective” of Berger and Luckmann (1966) which was employed in this research and “The spine” section will present a brief introduction to each chapter.

1.2 THE ORIGINS OF THE THESIS

Over eighteen years ago I began teaching sociology at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Dublin. It was a journey of self-reflective teaching and learning, as I engaged in a career which would prove to be what my parents had always believed I would become, a teacher. I was the first in my family to attend HE, but they reinforced the power and value of education, supported and believed in me always.

There is nothing more exciting to me than teaching sociology, to connect with the students, to build relationships, to establish trust, to encourage them to think differently about something that they have taken for granted, their whole lives. To cause a shift in their thinking, that they could *do* HE even if they were the first in their families. For some who came from criminal backgrounds, some who were on methadone, many were homeless, some were working all night and sleeping in my class, some brought their babies into the class, some were mothers of eight children, some who had been bakers for 40 years, many were traumatized from being in direct provision, some who had been in the care system, some were none of the above, it did not matter (not that what they had been through did not matter) in the classroom, we were all there on a collective journey to learn. We drew on their experiences and that in turn validated their engagement with HE and made them feel like they should be there, they were seen. Fleming and Finnegan (2011) refer to the 'burden of recognition in pedagogy'. In light of this I tailored my teaching so that it spoke "directly to the social and life experiences and needs" of the first-generation students (FGS) in the class; this burden weighed heavy on me, it still does (Fleming & Finnegan, 2011, pp. 11-12). It was my responsibility to ensure their 'fitability' in HE. Their lived experiences brought the sociological topics to life, they brought their family lives and their experiences into the classroom.

My favourite conversation in the class was when a student puts up their hand and says, "is that like when" and I would say YES.... We have succeeded, because in order for them to link what I was saying, to something they had experienced meant, we had made a connection to their past, their family or their life. They were trying to find an educational hook to link to their pre-existing knowledge (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020) which was based on their social class or their gendered experiences. So they would ask "so is that like when Eminem rapped about ... or is that like when lady GAGA wore her meat dress... or is that like when the woman on Love island did this.... Or is that like when my nanny brings the dinner into her neighbour ...My Ma used to say he didn't belong in the flats she didn't feel like she belonged there she was better than that... is that like what you are saying". These examples in the classroom were the students bringing *their* collective knowledge, *their* lived experiences into the classroom, which were steeped in their culture (Hoggart, 1957).

The students were not blank canvases sitting in front of me, replete of capital (Azaola, 2020; Reay, 1998, 2003, 2004; Bourdieu, 1986), they were "pathfinders" (Fleming & Finnegan, 2011, p. 13). They were full to the brim with socially situated individual and familial capital (Gofen, 2009). All the experiences shared were valuable to the class and made all the students feel like they belonged. I noted that constant connections were made in class through these *bridging examples*, I tried to bring HE both literally and metaphorically home for them. As a

pedagogical process it was real, it was valid and valued in my class. My aim in the classroom is to connect with the students' lived experiences, to meet them where they are; to empower them and to make sociology real for them irrespective of their familial educational status.

In bringing the above back to the research, one day in class a student explained to me that her son had started to study at the same time as her and this caused her to feel pride that he had made it to HE. She guided him and spoke about their joint experience in class often, she would say 'ah the family is in higher education now' and laugh. Another day I asked for an example of a shared understanding and a student explained that she and her dad had a shared understanding about education because he was in, HE too. As a sociologist I always look for patterns. This was a pattern I began to see year after year: there were at least three students in every year of up to 120, in each student group, which had a child or parent from their family, in HE at the same time. This was where the idea for this research germinated, in the classroom with my students. I wanted to explore if FGS literally brought their HE home with them. As such, I wanted to focus on the collective, whilst still acknowledging the individual dimension of HE experiences. This research in some small part aimed to shine a light on this neglected area in HE policy and practice, 'the familial' because for too long in Ireland it has been ignored, by policy makers and HE institutions. Family is recognised at primary and secondary level education to some degree in Ireland. There has been moves to increase the partnership between parents and schools with the emphasis coming from a legislative perspective in the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill, (DES, 2019) which will support the engagement of schools with parents. This Bill is still at the third stage and is still currently before Dáil Eireann. The conversation in Ireland about a partnership approach between parents and HE is in practice, silent. It has been noted in the work of Fleming et al. (2010) on mature students in HE and they refer in their findings to the "most valued resource for non-traditional students was the support they received from their families" (p.10). The discussion above, explains my personal purpose and reasons for engaging in this research topic. The next section briefly sets out the broader context of this research and the shifting Irish HE landscape.

1.3 THE CONTEXT - LAY OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION LAND- INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY

This research was undertaken at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB). Historically the IOTs were primarily focused on serving the needs of mainly working-class areas, with historically low levels of HE participation and high levels of unemployment (West

et al., 2013). The IOTs were rooted in the original missions of Regional Technical Colleges (RTC), towards specific professions or jobs. The human capital debate had the Institutes of Technology firmly in its grasp (Loxley, et al., 2014) to succeed they must be responsive to the growing demands of the economy and all new courses must be able to justify a demand for the skills within society, in order for the course/degree to come to fruition (HEA, 2012).

The changes in the Institute of Technology sector over the last number of years underpinned by the National Strategy for Higher Education 2013-2030 (2011) more commonly referred to as the 'Hunt Report', gave rise to a report "Towards a future higher education landscape" (2012). It proposed mergers between Institutes of Technology. The Dublin project also known as TU4D's (Technological University for Dublin) purpose was constitute Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T.), Institute of Technology Tallaght (I.T.T.) and Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (I.T.B.) as a Technological University for Dublin. After meeting key targets and gaining the approval of the international panel assembled to evaluate the application¹ in May 2018, on the 1st of January 2019 DIT, ITT and ITB became a Technological University. This involved the three very different institutions, different missions, different student socio-economic cohorts, Governing Bodies, President and student body merging and becoming Ireland's first Technological University (TU)². I was very much involved in this process as the staff representative on the Joint strategy steering Board which oversaw the application process of TU4D and as a member of the Governing Body of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB), which approved the initial alignment and decision to apply for TU status. I am still at the forefront of the organizational design process within TU Dublin and as member of the Governing Body of TU Dublin.

In relation to this research, it was important to note that the Higher Education authority (HEA) (2015b) report into the grant recipients, clearly demonstrated the degree to which IOTs were at the forefront of the widening participation agenda. Similarly, this was also identified by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], noting that historically the IOT sector has attracted a higher proportion of students from a working class background than universities and is seen as "on the front line in the widening participation agenda" (OECD, 2004, p. 32). Within the various institutions we can see the

¹ Application by TU4Dublin Application for designation as a technological university <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/09/2.-TU4Dublin-TU-Application.pdf>

² The full documentation and chronology of correspondence available here: <https://hea.ie/policy/he-reform/technological-universities/technological-university-dublin/#:~:text=Following%20consideration%20of%20this%20report,technological%20university%20in%20January%202019.>

differing socio-economic profile of students, see below Fig 1.1. Many formally IOTs are now Technological Universities this has not changed the student socio-economic cohort as yet. For example ITB was classified as 17% disadvantaged compared to University College Dublin which is 5% before TU Status was granted. As there were no accurate statistics on first generation students (FGS) per institution in Ireland, it could tentatively be assumed that the majority of students from lower social classes are FGS, while acknowledging that this was not the case for all students.

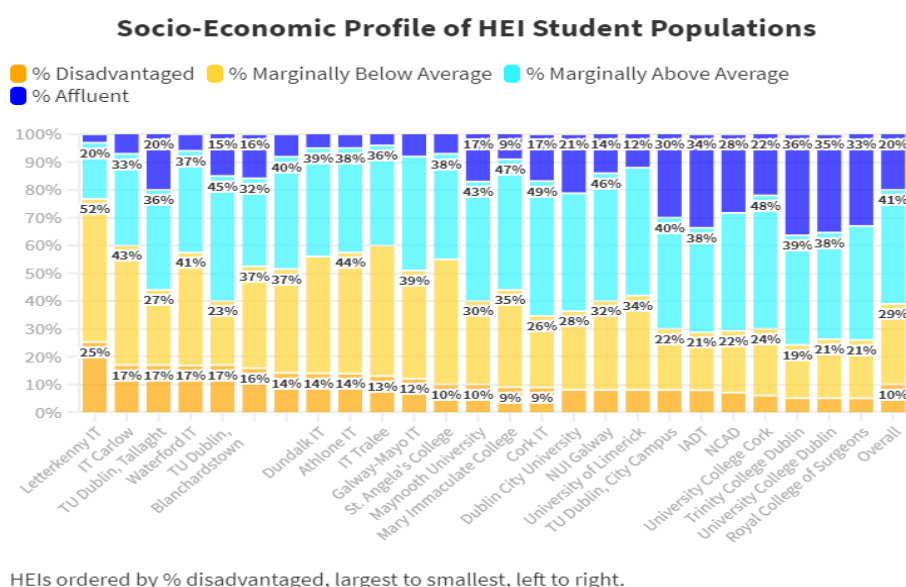


Figure 1. 1 Socio-economic profile of HEI student populations (HEA 2020)

All participants involved in this research were in receipt of the SUSI grant³. In ITB 60% of all students were in receipt of the SUSI grant. This could be used as a proxy for first generation participation, but it does not tell the full picture. The other point to note here was that since the TU's merged, the variation in SUSI grants across campuses will not be captured separately anymore as they have become one institution a TU. If we look at Fig 1.2, TU Dublin the variation in receipt of SUSI grant across the campuses, which map onto the previous IOTs was stark. Blanchardstown at 60%, Tallaght at 57% and City Campus 38% of students in receipt of the SUSI grant. The prediction by concerned academic staff members was that the differences between Blanchardstown Tallaght and City campus will disappear and become an average, when the difference on the ground between campuses is 22%. This is problematic

³ SUSI Grant income threshold of a total reckonable income in the tax year January to December 2022 of less than €25,000 for the special rate. There are various thresholds ranging from 25,000 up to €62,000 to varying degrees the students will qualify for maintenance and fees or just fees. <https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/income/undergraduate-income-thresholds-and-grant-award-rates/>

for many reasons, will there be adequate supports, impact on resourcing, potentially increasing the points for courses and consolidation of duplication of provision and potentially have an impact on target setting both within the new TU and externally by the HEA. It could possibly have a diluting effect on the socio-economic disparity across the TU Dublin and result in an average which does not reflect the context of the on-campus student profile.

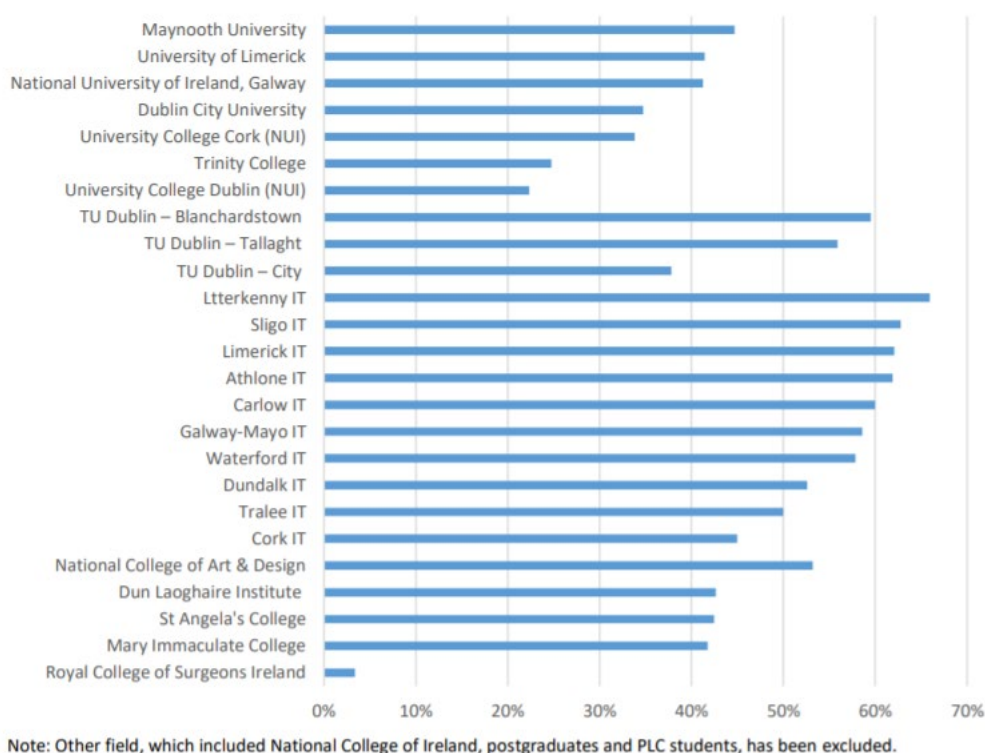


Figure 1. 2 Social Impact Assessment Series Student Grant Scheme (SUSI Grants) DEPER, 2020

While statistics and target setting are important, sometimes we are missing categories of students who need nuanced supports (for example yearlong induction processes, summer induction programmes, Childcare, Family meals) to remove or mitigate barriers that they may encounter, both getting into and through HE. FGSs as an example, who may be mature⁴, single parents, from lower social classes⁵ but ultimately it was their experiences as a FGS, which could give an insight into the barriers and supports needed to complete HE. For the purposes of this research the notion of ‘family’ will have very broad definition as such, it will depend on

⁴ Lynch (1997) defined the mature or older learner in HE as a “person under thirty-five years of age who has completed a leaving certificate and lives in an urban area and has yet to complete a third-level qualification. She/he tends to be participating in higher education to improve their career prospects and will more likely than not have some professional or post-secondary qualification already. It is also likely that she/he will have a lower-middle-class background (p.9).

⁵ Defined as students from non-manual, semi-skilled and unskilled socio-economic backgrounds (HEA, 2014).

what the participant's consider their immediate family composition to be. This research drew on the definition of the family by Anthony Giddens (2006):

The family is a group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage, or adoption, who form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children (p. 1016).

For the purposes of this research first-generation families (FGF) will be defined as immediate family members who have no experience of HE, this includes parents. Guided by the work of Thomas and Quinn (2007) for example if a student's parent(s) has a HE qualification then the student would be second generation. The overall family will be considered FG if parents or children have not engaged in HE.

First generation entrants are those for whom the older responsible generation (not necessarily biological parents) have not had an opportunity for university study at any time in their lives (Thomas & Quinn 2007, p. 7).

Therefore, this research focused on first generation students (FGS) and then broadened to consider the dyadic pair and their family members as first generation families (FGF). The next section will present the research questions.

1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching research question was *"What are the experiences of first-generation families with an intergenerational dyadic pair, engaging in higher education?"*

The aims and objectives of this research were developed as a series of sub-questions which evolved by engaging with the literature and the theoretical framework of Berger and Luckmann (1966), which was firmly embedded within the methodological process. This research aimed to capture the relational, the dynamic nature of family life, and their collective experiences of HE.

Initially there were ten research sub questions, which were then were grouped into two sets, Questions 1-5 were questions based on the collective (The family) while questions Q6-9 were individually focused (Student). It was important that the collectively orientated questions were pushed to the fore of the research and the individually orientated questions provided the context. Question 10, what role has the higher education policy landscape played in the emergence of this social phenomenon? This question was explored through an examination

of the policy documents examined as part of the Chapter 2 Literature Review Section 2.3. Findings from Questions 6 to 9 were integrated into the family vignettes in Chapter 7 or merged with another relevant theme for discussion. The next section will examine each of the collectively orientated research questions (1-5) which were the primary focus for this research.

Question 1

How does the participation in Higher Education of two family members impact relationships within the family unit?

This question explored the impact of the dyadic pair's participation in HE on the family. It was devised to try and capture the relationship dynamics between the dyadic pair, their family members, their peers and extended families. The family focus groups were valuable because they captured the relational dimensions of family life from the non-HE participants.

Question 2

How does the participation of two family members in Higher Education effect the family and the roles within the family?

This question was to examine the impact of the dyadic pair's participation on the roles within the family unit and how this role conflict was managed and negotiated. Roles in the context of this research were influenced by the theoretical framework and they are based on reciprocal performances and they are as a result of shared typifications. Berger and Luckman's (1966) definition of roles can be summarized as:

In principle then an action and its sense can be apprehended apart from the individual performances of it and the variable subjective processes associated with them. Both self and other can be apprehended as performers of objective generally known actions, which are recurrent and repeatable by any actor of the appropriate type (p. 72).

Question 3

How does educational socialisation within the family between family members take place? What are the family's educational values?

This question attempted to capture an insight into the process by which the parent(s) transmit to their children that education is important or not. This was therefore linked to the

family's educational values. Was education considered important to the family members and how did they transmit this value to the next generation. Berger and Luckmann (1966) definition⁶ of socialisation was of key importance here. The role the family played in the primary socialisation process, focusing specifically on educational values, guided by the theoretical perspective documented in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.5.1 Primary Socialisation and 5.5.2 Secondary socialisation) was examined during the research process. The socialisation lens that Berger and Luckmann (1966) provided, aided the formulation of the sub-questions associated with this question. This also had corresponding methodological implications, which resulted in moving towards a family focus group to capture the inter-subjective intergenerational effects of the socialisation process.

Question 4

Does higher education come into the family home?

I coined the term 'liquid higher education' (LE) during phase 5 of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the findings as an umbrella metaphor to capture the various ways by which HE flowed into the home. As discussed in Chapters 9 (Sections 9.3 and 9.5 and 10 section 10.2), the relevant findings were grouped together under this LE theme in order to explain how HE permeated the collective of the family home. This term was in part influenced by the work of Bauman (2000) and his concept of 'liquid modernity' but there was no relevance to the meaning of both terms. The main aim of this question was to gain an understanding of how and what came into the family home from HE (individual to the collective). The term liquid education⁷ was to denote the free flowing movement of knowledge without boundaries from the individual to the collective via the mycorrhizal network of the family. The mycorrhizal network⁸ was another term I coined to explain the invisible network between individual family members. When the family activates its mycorrhizal role, it redistributes the family roles and functions to other individuals in the home. This role was demonstrated in the findings Chapter 8 Section 8.3 (Roles) and was activated so the family could survive the disruption to the everyday reality of family life (discussed in Chapter 10 sections 10.3 and 10.4).

Question 5

⁶ Socialization is defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society" (p. 130).

⁷ Liquid education will be explained in Section 1.5

⁸ The Mycorrhizal role will be examined and explained in detail in Chapter 10 section 10.3.

How does the language and associated knowledge acquisition in higher education impact the first-generation learners and what influence if any does it have on the immediate and extended family?

The question could have been explored as part of Q4 but because the findings associated with the question during the pilot stage were vast and revelatory and the emphasis placed on language by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their theory, I felt that it was necessary for language to be examined separately, acknowledging that language was an example of a LE effect on the family.

1.5 Liquid Education

In this research the word Liquid Education was employed, as a conceptual tool to explain the relational and dynamic nature of what was happening in the families when the dyadic pair engaged in higher education. The dyadic pair were experiencing an embodied version of higher education, but the other family members were experiencing higher education by proxy in the family home, but experiencing it none the less. The metaphor of liquid education was to explain the shared nature of the higher education experience in the home by all family members. Liquid education can be distributed in the home; it is shared but it is not shared equally. Liquid education is not a psychological concept it is a shared relational concept which resides outside of the students and family members it resides in the in-between space between the student and the higher education institution, the family. It is comprised of knowledge, language, relational encounters and communication. It is dependent upon their being students and an informal space in which they reside outside of the higher education institution. It has a variable temporal dimension, the greater the amount of time the family members spend together the greater the experience of liquid education in the home. Liquid education can be experienced in the home both positively and negatively this is dependent upon the continuity within the home environment. The greater the change in roles the initial perception of liquid education is negative, post role transformations the perception of liquid education was more positively perceived. It is on a pendulum and it swings from positive to negative. If the family members had a predisposed positive view of education the liquid education effects were great. The impact of liquid education on the family was on the roles in the family, which then had an impact on the relationships within the family. Extended family relationships were affected, the language within the home changed, the non-HE participants

were exposed to the higher education language of the dyadic pair. Liquid education can shift the power dynamics between the couples in the home. If the partner/husband of the student had no experience of higher education the Liquid education effects caused a reflection on their own educational achievements. The home environment changed, the very fabric of the home was altered. There were books on the tables, projects strewn around, it was obvious and evident that liquid education had permeated the family home. Liquid education is not a one-way process from the University to the home. It is in fact a two-way process and liquid education can flow from the family into the higher education institutions through the students as they move with the liquid education from the home into higher education. Example of the taxi man student returning to education with all of his accumulated knowledge of driving a taxi in Dublin for 20 years and the people he had met and the stories he had heard made it easier for him to apply theory to practice. This will be discussed in Chapter 10 the Discussion and mapped out in Fig 10.2. The next section will examine the dyadic pair, the collective and the liminal.

1.6 'IT IS NOT ALWAYS ABOUT ME' THE DYADIC PAIR, THE COLLECTIVE AND THE LIMINAL

Central to the study was the importance of the dyadic pair and the collective. In this context In this research, I propose that the family in fact occupies the liminal between the individual and HE. It is important to stress at this point that while the individual dimensions of the student experience were explored and examined during the research process, they were not the focus for this research. The individual findings were embedded into the family vignettes in Chapter 7. As such the individual experiences and educational biographies provided the foundations for the collective experiences to be examined. This research points to a new cohort of students in Ireland participating in HE, as individuals but also collectively as members of a family. My intention has been to offer an insight into the lived experiences of families, where two members are experiencing HE at the same time. The parent and child will be referred to throughout as a *dyadic pair*, the parent will be referred to as the *Parent Student* and the child will be referred to as the *Adult Child Student* and they are in HE concurrently. The other family members will be referred to as non-HE family members (non-HE).

The significance of this research was that *dyadic intergenerational pairs* in HE concurrently, has not been examined to date in HE research either on their impact on the family, or how the family experiences HE in Ireland. This research will tentatively point to liquid HE effect being

experienced by the family, with the family positioned in-between the individual and HE, as the family activated its mycorrhizal role. Liquid education will be understood as the flow of education by individuals, both formal and informal, into and out of education, which includes language and experiences, it was relational, it relies on communication and can include tangible objects. This research will focus on the out of education effects of liquid education on the family. O'Shea (2016) observed that parental education impacts the family but that the details of this are relatively unknown, she explains they are "hidden or invisible outcomes from university attendance: conversations within the household and the passing of knowledge between family members" (p.75). This research aims to extend this observation by O'Shea (2016) and gain an understanding of the experiences of both HE in the home and also how the family enters HE through the dyadic pairs. The dyadic pair are intergenerational which means that this research captured the experiences of HE across the generations. This research moves to where Wainwright and Marandet (2010) suggest:

A much needed next step is an engagement with children of parents in learning. Only then can we get a more comprehensive sense of aspirations and potential for social mobility through inter-generational learning (p. 463).

This research engages with the children of parents in HE because a parent and their child are engaging in HE and examines the non-HE children voices and how they perceive the impact of HE on the family.

One could say tentatively that certain policy agendas have converged and given rise to this social phenomenon; equality of access, widening participation and lifelong learning. The policy objective of educating families in HE, while not set as a specific policy objective by the government has as an unanticipated consequence on educational policies and initiatives, which emerged as a new social phenomenon or student cohort in Irish HE: families, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers are in HE together. This will be briefly examined in Chapter 2 Section 2 and will provide a policy context relevant to this phenomenon.

The term first-generation student (FGS) encompasses within this research, the mature, lifelong learner, the standard student who attends HE directly from school. Instead of age being a defining feature of their grouped experience as most research in this field examines, either mature or standard students, this research will focus on the intergenerational, relational and socialisation side of student experiences. London (1992) in particular contends that one of the greatest barriers facing FGS is being on the outskirts of two cultures, '*in-between*' friends, family and HE. The use of the term FGS or FGF was more positive and all-encompassing, including the participants lives instead of just being solely defined by their

social class. This research shed light on the in-between discussions which appear as an overlapping theme in the work of Fleming, (2013), Merrill, (2015), Holdsworth, (2009), Hoggart, (1957) and Inman and Mayes, (1999). There were many dimensions to the in-between approach, does the family occupy the in between position between the individual and HE? This will be examined in Chapter 10, considering if the family, was acting like a mycorrhizal network, exercising its mycorrhizal role of support and re-distribution of resources and roles in order for the family to survive the disruption to the reality of the family's experience of HE.

The origins of the in-between discussion arose from the research findings but conceptually the question arose in tandem during the research process from reading the work of Fleming (2013) and examining the work of Rachel Whiteread (1992). Fleming's (2013) article titled *Heaney's concept of in-between as an epistemological position for PhD research*, explored the in-between concept inspired by the work of Seamus Heaney (1987).

Fleming (2013) referred to the poem *Terminus* by Seamus Heaney to illuminate the in-between:

Two buckets were easier carried than one.

I grew up in-between.

Fleming (2013) argues that the *in-between* space may provide opportunities for researchers to contemplate or inhabit in order to explore issues of diversity and equality, but fundamentally as a valid research position. The 'in-between' perspective can navigate between the elite and establishment on the one hand and outsiders on the other (Fleming, 2013, p. 3). This perspective provided by Fleming (2013) forced a period of self-reflection on my role in the research process, the research process itself and the research findings. This will be discussed in section 6.8 of Chapter 6 the Methodology as part of the section on reflexivity.

In addition to the work of Fleming (2013) the work of Whiteread (1992) was also influential. She spent the majority of her life casting the spaces in-between objects she was most renowned for her works HOUSE where she cast a Victorian house in concrete. She focused on the 'in-between' because it was the negative space around objects where everyday life takes place and traces of people's encounters with the objects have occurred.



Figure 1. 3 Rachel Whiteread, Untitled (Domestic) (2002)(In-Between space cast the staircase)

Furniture is designed for and exists in close relation to the human body; in our daily life we are dependent on it and leave the traces of our physical presence on it. ...not reproducing the original object, serve to defamiliarise the familiar and to represent it as a memory...The smell of people, just everyday living. (Quoted in Rachel Whiteread 1992, p. 13.)

Whiteread tried to make physical, the in-between everyday spaces of interaction, a space that is invisible, she makes visible, the space where everyday life happens. Berger and Luckmann (1966) were employed as the theoretical frame for this research which will be discussed under Section 1.8 below and in Chapter 5. The primary focus for this research was the everyday, the space in-between the learners and HE, the space where their knowledge flows, memories are made and knowledge is passed intergenerationally to the next generation.

The HE experience is not easy for FGS, but within the home the dyadic pair were supported by their common experience and the family. West (1996) alludes to the process of informal learning (the home as an example) and notes that it may “provide fragments of good experience to enable a self to survive when this seems almost impossible” (p. 27). The findings

from this research shed light on the fragments of good familial experiences, which the family provides to the dyadic pair engaging in HE, which enable both the self and the collective family survive the HE experience.

The impact of an increase in parental education has been linked with an increase in educational aspirations for their children and to a positive change in the home environment (Aldridge, 2004; Edwards, 1993; Feinstein, et.al, 2008).

Raising skills levels of adults is perceived as a key driver for improving the aspiration and achievements of their children and hence potentially promoting social mobility (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010, p. 460).

There has been a shift according to Edwards (2002) as noted in his examination of the work of Basil Bernstein, from examining the macro structures at play which have an impact on the reproduction of social inequalities, towards a focus on the content and more specifically relevant for this research the “transmission of educational knowledge” (Edwards, 2002, p. 530) at a micro level. Locating the familial role in the dyadic pair’s journey is of critical importance in order to gain an understanding into the collective experiences of HE. There were several undercurrents to the research, gender is one such example it was not explicitly focused upon in the research questions or theoretical frame, but it is present and embedded within the themes, literature, theoretical discussion and appears in the words of the participants.

1.7 Gender

In any study a researcher makes a number of decisions which gives the research a particular orientation. In the case of this study the notion of ‘gender’ amongst other sociological categories was much considered and how to incorporate it within the design and subsequent analysis. There is a gender dimension to this study, however, to focus on gender alone as an explicit theme could have resulted in missing aspects of the lived experiences of the participants because the gender ‘lens’ may have narrowed the focus and potentially led to missing important new findings, or led one to go where others have gone with research previously. The focus throughout the research process, was to maintain true to the research objectives and to focus on the family as a collective, which were first generation and from the lower social classes (the women were impacted upon disproportionately because of the societal expectations on them due to their gender and role as mother). The feminist research tradition influenced the research process, the participant’s contributions and voices were

fundamental to the process, they were heard and they had agency during the research process. Gender more specifically mature women has been previously explored in HE research (Brine & Waller, 2004; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010; Merrill, 1999; Reay, 2002; O'Shea, 2015b; Lister, 2003; West, 2014; Zart, 2019; Bradley, 2000; Gouthro, 2005; Webber, 2017). The above authors' research were of foundational importance to this research topic. This research did overtly seek to go where previous research had not and to carve out and uncover new insights into the lived experiences collectively, of HE on the family. Gender as a theme is not ignored, it is embedded within the themes of relationships, roles and educational socialisation. Within this research gender permeates a large portion of the literature review and it is acknowledged that gender is continually imbricated into the lives of the families in this research. The next section provides an overview of the theoretical lens employed in this research, that of Berger and Luckmann (1966).

1.8 Theoretical Perspective

It is evident in the research questions above and from the previous comments that Berger and Luckmann (1966) was employed as the theoretical lens for this research. The main overarching reason for that decision was because the research question posed was based on the family, the socialisation process and the relational, which was dynamic. This theoretical perspective does not stand in opposition to the theoretical perspective of Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1990; 1991; 1999) nor does it render the work of Bourdieu of lesser importance, but due to the dominant utilization of Bourdieu's theory in educational research it was necessary to push further the theoretical application, of an alternative theory.

Bourdieu and other relevant theorists will be discussed in the literature review Chapter 3, Chapter 5 Theoretical Lens and in the Discussion Chapter 10.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) placed an emphasis on the role of the 'significant others' in their work and the role they play in the primary socialisation process. They argue that in order for learning to occur for a child, there must be an emotional attachment with a 'significant other'. The dyadic pair are in HE together the child is in HE with their 'significant other'. The significance of this relationship and its effects are explored in Chapter 5 Section 5.5; Chapter 10 Relationship of the Dyadic Pair; Intergenerational learning between the dyadic pairs. The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) proved valuable during the research process from their emphasis on language to the 'stock of knowledge', 'relevance structures,' role of the 'significant others' as noted previously. Their work provided a theoretical 'way into' whether

HE participation entered into the family and by incorporating their theory it became evident that HE posed a threat to the pre- HE 'taken for granted reality' of the families in this research. Their theory also forced a reflection on whether the dyadic pairs had created a 'sub-universe' and whether the families were engaging in a re-socialisation process. Employing Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work guided me to consider the role of language and the dismantling effects of the newly acquired 'language' in HE on the family members including the dyadic pairs. Relationships and process were paramount to this research; the sociology of knowledge focuses on the 'processes in which the construction of people's realities and meanings occur' (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 1). Many of these considerations are examined in Chapter 5 in detail and applied in Chapter 10 to the research findings. The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) was utilised in order to see things that previously others may have not, due to the theoretical frame they employed. The next section provides an overview of the thesis.

1.9 Overview- The Spine of the Thesis and Contribution to Knowledge

Chapter 2, 3 & 4 The Literature review spans three chapters. Chapter 2 examines briefly the how of the literature review and the policies, which have given rise in part, to the social phenomenon. The umbrella term of widening participation will encompass Lifelong learning and the access agenda in order to try to locate the family within the two influencing policy agendas. This research is not a policy focused piece of work, but policy must be acknowledged and examined because the phenomenon has been influenced by policy objectives at National level and the research firmly sits within the HE policy context.

Chapter 3 and 4 present an extensive overview of literature pertinent to the research question, to ascertain the potential crossovers and impact of HE on the family. This section will navigate through theoretical domains and thematic literature groupings.

Chapter 5: The Theoretical Lens examines the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. It presents a justification for the choice of Berger and Luckmann and sets out the details of their theory under three key sections; 1. The foundations of knowledge in everyday life; 2. Society as objective reality 3. Society as subjective reality.

The methodology Chapter 6 presents the research paradigm which includes the research questions (Section above 1.4), the ontology, epistemology, theoretical lens and a justification for the case study approach. It moves to examining the four stage research process, Stage 1 literature review, Stage 2 Questionnaire, Stage 3 Qualitative research and Stage 4 Thematic

analysis. It documents the specific research methods employed in the case study which encompassed educational biography, Individual interviews and family focus groups. The final section discusses trustworthiness, reflexivity and limitations of the research.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 summarise the research findings in a coherent and transparent manner, written in a way which tries to do justice to the participant's *voices*. These chapters will not provide detailed analysis of the findings as this will be deferred to the Discussion in Chapter 10. Chapter 7 will present the family vignettes which incorporate the individual educational biographies and individual interviews in a summarised manner for the purposes of context. Chapter 8 examines the collective dimensions of HE and specifically examines Roles and Relationships. Chapter 9 discusses Educational Socialisation, Liquid education which includes language and transformations.

The Discussion Chapter 10 provides an in-depth discussion of the findings by examining their relevance to the body of literature discussed and the theoretical lens presented in Chapter 5. It aims for a synthesis and a tentative interpretation of the research findings in order to facilitate situating it within the broader body of HE knowledge. To ultimately provide a justification that the research question was answered. The findings are discussed under two key metaphors of Liquid education and mycorrhizal role. Running as a subterranean river is the consideration that the family occupies the liminal, the in-between the HE institution and the individual.

Chapter 11 returns to the research questions and explores and reiterates the main findings from the research, evaluating the values of employing the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) as the theoretical frame, puts forward potential future research and makes recommendations from this research for macro (policy), meso (institutional) and micro (individual student) levels. It examines the limitations of the research, provides a reflective letter to my grandparents about what I have learned on my PhD journey. It concludes with a brief comparison of the work of Hoggart and Heaney to explain the sometimes torn nature of their experiences of HE, but for the dyadic pairs because HE is not solely an individual pursuit but a collective one, the family provides a mycorrhizal role, they do not feel torn.

Contribution to knowledge

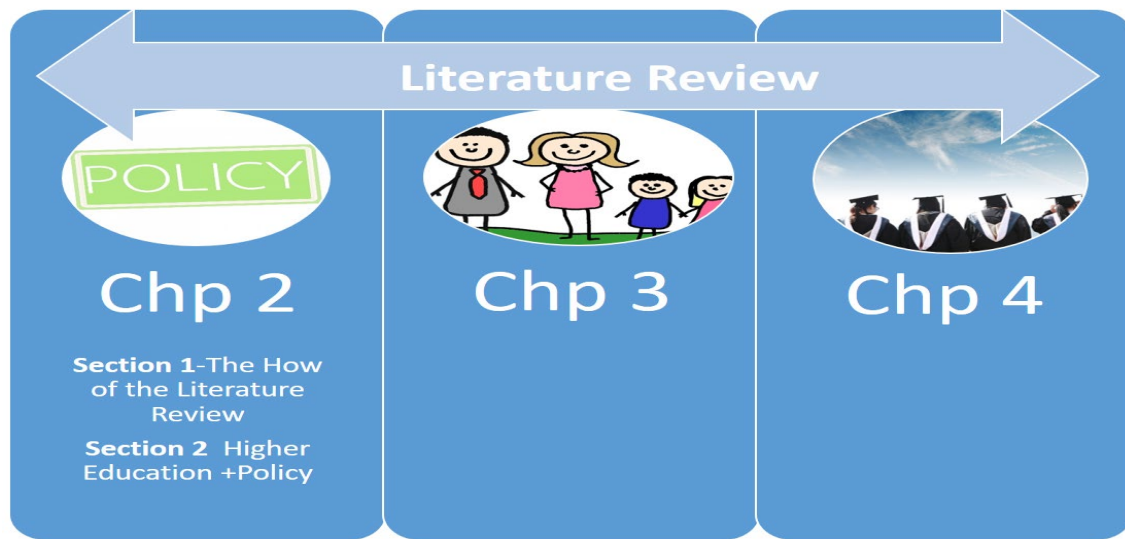
This research challenges the assumption within HE policy and research that HE solely resides within the individual and is experienced by an individual atomized from their familial and relational contexts. It employs an underutilised theoretical frame Berger and Luckmann (1966) during the research process and to examine the findings. It delves where very few

researchers have gone, into the private realms of the family home, to examine if and how higher education entered the family home? This research uncovered the impact of Higher education on the family and the conclusions center around the influence on familial language, roles, relationships and socialisation, the family undoubtedly experiences HE liquid effects. This will be further examined in Chapter 11 (The conclusion) section 11.2.

Conclusion

This chapter set out the personal and professional foundations of the study and located the work within the evolving HE landscape. It introduced the dyadic pairs and their families and outlined how the “in-between” space emerged as a means of understanding their experiences. While gender is not the formal theoretical frame for this thesis, it remains an undercurrent that threads through the literature, the fieldwork and the later analysis. The chapter also sketched the theoretical lens and highlighted the elements of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) work that guided the interpretation of the findings. In doing so, it established the conceptual ground on which the thesis rests. Taken together, these sections position the study within its intellectual, policy and personal contexts, and clarify how the thesis will unfold. The next chapter begins this journey by turning to the policy landscape and outlining the approach to the literature review. From that point onward, each chapter builds towards the discussion in Chapter 10, where the findings, the literature and the theoretical framework are brought into sustained dialogue to answer the research questions and to make a meaningful contribution to HE research.

CHAPTER 2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW



2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the context for this research, including an introduction to the research questions and theoretical perspective. This chapter along with Chapters 3 and 4 collectively are the literature review, beginning with this chapter on HE policy to provide the policy context for this research. This chapter also seeks to examine research Question 10: *What role has HE policy played in the emergence of this social phenomenon?* Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 examine the literature pertinent to the research questions and span several thematic areas.

This chapter has two sections. Section 1 explains “the how” of the literature review. Section 2 aimed to answer Question 10 as stated above and examine some key policy documents which may have played a role in the social phenomenon of intergenerational dyadic pairs in HE. When reviewing and selecting appropriate policy documents I considered three factors which for the purposes of this research were referred to as push factors, which were potentially enabling the phenomenon under investigation 1) widening participation, 2) access and 3) the lifelong learning (LLL) agendas and whether these policy agendas may have given rise in part, to the intergenerational cohort of dyadic pairs; a parent and child from the same family in HE concurrently. The children of the parents in HE were enabled by both the access and widening participation policy agenda, this will be explored further in Section 2.

2.2 Section 1: The “How” of the literature review

Before the literature review is presented over the next three chapters, this section will explain how the literature review was conducted. This is also briefly referred to in Chapter 6 Methodology under Stage 1 of the research process and this process continued for the duration of the research. For a piece of literature or policy document to be included in the literature review it must have assisted in setting the context for the research or lead to knowledge which would assist in answering the research questions. This is a cyclical process, in that while reading the literature and Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) theory, it generated further questions, which informed the methodology. Having completed a degree in library and information studies in UCD in 2002, I had acquired skills necessary to carry out an in-depth literature review, which also resulted in a tabular form output of the literature examined, which resulted in a 69 page 30,000 word document listing and indexing books and journal articles pertinent to the research questions. There was a gap identified in the literature because there was no research which explored the intergenerational dyadic pair’s experiences in HE and the impact of HE on the family.

Section 2, of this Chapter, HE Policies “the how” involved an examination of 97 policy documents and pertinent literature, which resulted in an in-depth examination of 52 policies (Appendix A). A further filtering process occurred depending on the relevance to the policy push factors (Widening participation, Lifelong learning and Access) of this phenomenon. It was also central to the purpose of this section that it aimed at answering the research *Question 10: What role has HE policy played in the emergence of this social phenomenon?* An evaluation of the relevance of the policies was also undertaken to assess if the role of the family featured in HE policy.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of the literature review are best explained by the diagram below Fig 2.1. It traces the key search terms employed during the initial stages of the research process. Literature was filtered for method in that this literature review predominantly features qualitative sociological research. Pertinent quantitative research was examined and if it was deemed to fit the research question then it was included. Journals which focused on HE were examined and searches were conducted within those journals for the key words below, which came from the broad scoping exercise and focused on the family and HE. In order to fully examine and give insight to the thematic areas which emerged from the research findings, it was necessary to move slightly beyond purely sociological writings and a loop back process was undertaken in order to examine literature that was not initially examined but was necessary to explore and include because of the research findings.

The purpose of the literature review is to provide context to the research questions. The literature discussed over the following chapters is vast but held together by two key overarching but intersecting themes, the family and HE.

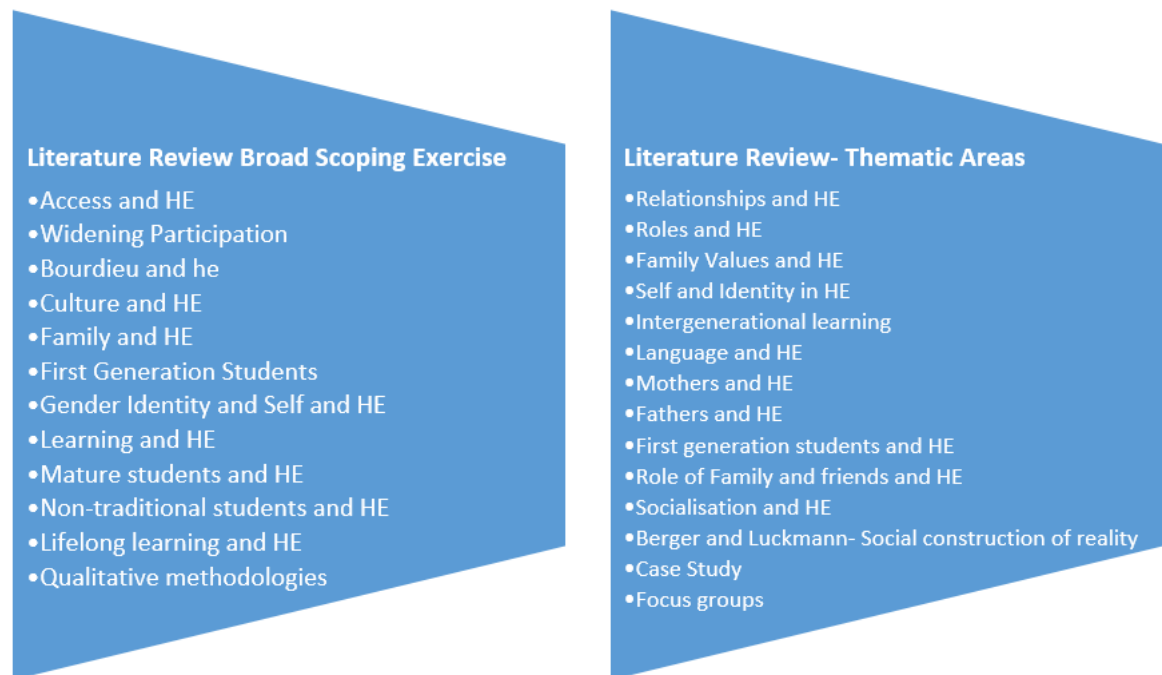
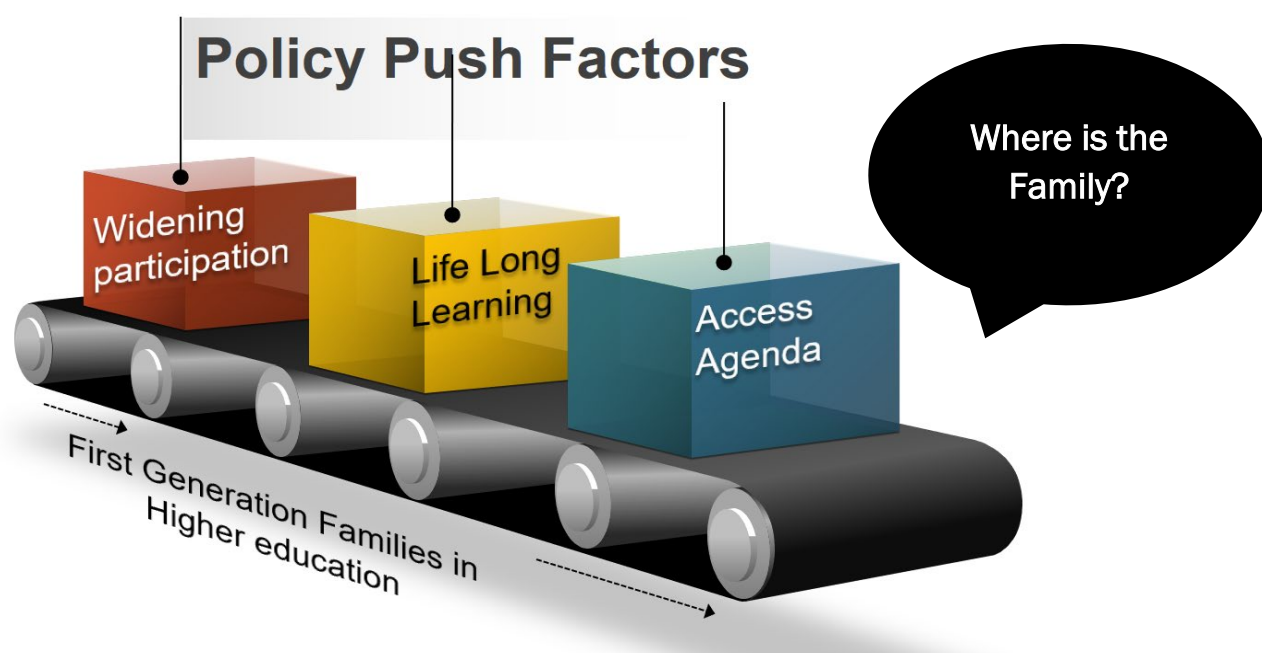


Fig 2. 1 Search Terms employed in the research process

The next Section 2 HE Policy sets out the pertinent policy context for this research.

2.3 Section 2: Higher Education policy context



2.3.1 Introduction

Firstly, this section focuses on the potential push policy factors for this phenomenon in HE, previously explained as widening participation (WP), access and lifelong learning (LLL). Secondly this section examines if the family has been incorporated into HE policies discussed. The most pertinent policies were selected for inclusion in this section if they applied to the policy factors if they neglected to refer to the family or in fact they did make reference to the role of the family in HE. Until relatively recently, families, or the home, have not been incorporated within HE policies or for the contribution they make to the educational pursuits of their members has been ignored.

Widening participation is a term which is widely employed but sometimes it is ill-defined (Shah et al., 2016) and with the addition of the term equity of access it can be further understood to encapsulate the notion that it must “ensure that the HE student population reflects the diversity of the wider population in Ireland” (HEA, 2022b). This definition will be used as the overarching aim of the widening participation, access, equity of access and lifelong learning agendas for the purposes of this research. The most recent National Access Plan 2022-2028 extends beyond access and places focus on both participation and student success. It is helpful in placing parameters around the discussion in this chapter because it identifies the overlapping areas of widening participation, access and lifelong learning. The

next section will chronologically trace several key policy documents which assisted in setting the context for this research and due to the potential influence that HE policy had on this phenomenon.

It will begin in 1965 with the Investment in Education report and navigate through several key policy documents and conclude with the HEA Act of 2022.

The widening participation agenda can be traced back to the 1965 Investment in Education Report (Government of Ireland, 1965), which for the first time systematically assessed education in Ireland. It was commissioned by the Minister for Education Dr Patrick Hillery and carried out by the OECD. Investment in Education (1965) was the first major quantitative study on education in Ireland and gave rise to the concept of educational planning based on data; it also “crystallized the link between education and economy in its very title” (Fleming et al., 2022, p. 451). This report assessed the future needs for education while identifying the current social disadvantages within the Irish education system (Walsh, 2018). This was a landmark piece of research, which set the benchmark for all educational research to follow because finally there was a substantial in-depth analysis of education in Ireland. It also “signalled the emergence of a dominant ‘human capital’ paradigm in Irish educational policy” and a shift away from religious and cultural agendas dominating (Walsh & Loxley, 2015, p. 1130, Walsh, 2009; Harford & Fleming, 2018). For the first time there was fine-grained data on educational disadvantage, funding models of education and an assessment of the future demands for education which was evidence based (Walsh et al., 2014b). The 600-page Appendix material on industrial schools, special schools, demographic forecasting models population projections, school supply and demand of teacher’s models, attempted to determine school costs and the provision of new buildings in schools. Comprehensive data on all levels of the education system was presented, which included location analysis and mapped out every single area of the country. The educational disparities observed in the report marked the beginning of the consideration of inequalities within the Irish education system, and access to the education system at all levels were examined (Walsh, 2011; Walsh et al., 2014).

The 1965 report highlighted significant social class disparities among 17-19-year-olds with regard to HE participation. Specifically, less than 5% of this age group pursued HE, the report attributed this to cultural factors and the influence of Catholic teachings (marriage bar was still in place for teachers) that perpetuated the existing hierarchical social system. The HE system has historically made it challenging for researchers to effectively capture and measure widening participation in HE participation. This report (1965) gave attention for the first time to the socio-economic disparities across the country and in turn caused a shift in focus which

can be seen through the years in policy emphasis on widening participation, lifelong learning and access. Unfortunately, the topic of educational equality did not gather momentum politically after the Investment in Education Report (1965).

Of significance to this research is the origins of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTC), which can find their roots in both the work of the OECD in the beginning of the 1960's and Minister Hillery's announcement of the proposal for the RTCs to provide technical education (Walsh, 2014). A steering committee on Technical Education was established in 1966 and their report published in 1967 emphasised the link between HE policy and the economy (Walsh, 2014). The students who went to RTC's were to be work ready with skills to match the growing economic demands (Steering Committee on Technical education, 1969). The administrative actions implemented by the Government during 1967-1968, following the recommendations from the Steering Committee's report, ensured the creation of numerous technical colleges across various regions nationwide (Walsh, 2014).

When the government published the White Paper on Educational development in 1980 it only very briefly mentioned educational equality and recommended that a working party was set up to examine the issue. The Report by Minister for education in 1984 (Minister Hussey), *The Programme for Action in Education (1984-1987)* the topic of educational disadvantage featured and she actively pursued the removal of barriers to education faced by people who were deprived. She secured funding which was ring fenced and devised initiatives to focus on the significant disadvantages people faced (Fleming et al., 2022). Over time, various Ministers for Education had implemented strategies aimed at addressing different aspects of educational disadvantage. Despite these efforts, a fully integrated, thorough, and adequately funded reform plan did not emerge at that time.

Additionally in 1984 shifting the focus to adults and lifelong learning, *The Report of the Commission on Lifelong Learning (1984)* or also known as the Kenny Report expressed concern over the low participation rates of adults in HE. It made several recommendations which focused on the introduction of more flexible routes for adult students to HE and also further introduction of part time provision for undergraduate students. The report was ahead of its time because while it attempted to emphasise adult education, unfortunately it was too ahead of its time in that the political will or funding due to the recession was not there and many of the recommendations from the Kenny Report (1984) about adult education never came to fruition.

Moving on to the 1990's the 1998 Education Act had an impact on the WP agenda because it "expanded the (access) objective to include the notion of equity in terms of participation

instead of access alone” (Fleming et al., 2022, p. 452). The OECD 1991 Review of National policies for Education: Ireland, highlighted the need for policymakers to create specific solutions that would promote educational equity which would if realised, enable students from all socio-economic backgrounds to have the opportunity to succeed.

Following on the Green Paper – “Education for a changing world” (1992) was a discussion document included an invitation for consultation with interested persons, it served as a platform from which to set the educational agenda for the White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (1995). The Green Paper identified six aims, of note specific to this research are the following two:

1. To establish greater equity in education, particularly for those who are disadvantaged socially economically physically or mentally.
6. To ensure greater openness and accountability throughout the system and maximise parent involvement and choice.

Aim one is important because it emphasised the access and widening participation agendas and aim six is important because parents were included. While this is an improvement in that parents are brought to the education decision making table it is focused on school and not HE institutions.

On a note more aligned to the lifelong learning theme the Green Paper (1992) clearly set out the governments of the period objectives and aligns them with the emerging knowledge economy and the human capital agendas (Clancy, 2015; Coolahan, 2017; Fleming et al., 2022; Loxley et al, 2014; Walsh, 2018). Historically Irish HE “policy since the late 1960s has been firmly utilitarian, prioritising educational expansion to fulfil labour market needs and emphasising the ‘human capital’ rationale for investment in education” (Walsh & Loxley 2015, p. 1142; O’Sullivan, 2005). This human capital objective gathered further momentum within the Green Paper (1992), the shift in policy emphasis is evident.

The linkage between adult education and the economy can find some of its origins in the recommendations by the European Commission’s Industrial research and development advisory Committee (IRDAC) which advised “that HE institutions will need to adapt and profit from adult training as a mainstream rather than an ancillary occupation” (1991, p. 41). To reduce an adult down to an income stream is akin to “treating people as commodities” (Levine, 2014, p. 11). Arguably this ‘feeds back’ into the neoliberal and human capital agendas, which are still very present in HE (Lolich, 2011; Fleming, 2018; Walsh & Loxley, 2015). Education and the future prosperity of the country were linked and identified under

Aim 2 which proposed enhancing Irish education to better prepare students for life, work in an enterprise culture, and for becoming integrated European citizens.

The theme of 'lifelong learning' in the Green Paper was significant in the context of both family and HE because as Slowey (2012) points out the opportunities were not there historically for the lower social classes to attend. Within the Green Paper (1992) the economic drivers and demands for reskilling and upskilling meant that for many they had an opportunity to get trained or educated because of the economic momentum around lifelong learning. The human capital agenda was the primary driver and this meant that mature students who had never attended HE could utilise this opportunity (Slowey, 2012). Families in Ireland may have benefited intergenerationally from this decision because if the younger family members saw their parents break cycles of non-HE participation then maybe they would be more likely to attend (McCoy & Byrne, 2011; Marginson, 2015; Pires & Chapin, 2022). Regrettably as argued by Fleming (2018), this agenda also meant that LLL was being projected as a "solution to society's social and economic needs with the emphasis on creating a more flexible workforce for a changing labour market" (p.xi). This approach fails to take account of the "emancipatory potential as articulated by Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow" and this point made by Fleming who, emphasised the transformative vision of education and the potential to unlock and emancipate adults and be "an antidote to neoliberal policies" (Fleming, 2018, p. 1; Lolich, 2011). The Green Paper 1992 would have benefitted from the inclusion of the emancipatory perspective, the addition of the personal and collective transformational potential of education, not just purely the economic associated benefits (Waller, et al., 2011). This report was a heavily utilitarian and economically driven report.

As well as this emphasis on human capital formation, the family also featured in the Green Paper. However, it was a restatement of Article 42.1 of the Irish Constitution (1937) asserted that it was the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide according to their means for the religious and moral intellectual physical and social education of their children. The Green Paper (1992) firmly recognised the family as the primary educator and the state was there to complement the family. It directly refers to the primary and secondary socialisation process (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) which occurs in the family home "during their formative years children assimilate attitudes, values and aspirations in the home from their immediate environment and from their peer group" (Department of Education, 1992, p. 33). It emphasised the importance of the partnership approach between educational institutions and the family or more specifically parents. It does not specify that this partnership approach should cease in HE. Aim number six (as previously mentioned) in the Green Paper 1992 was "To ensure greater openness and accountability throughout the system and maximise

parental involvement and choice” (p.32). This aim firmly placed the family or parent as a subject/object for policy action within the report and emphasised the importance of parental involvement in education at all levels. However, it does not specify, primary, secondary or HE but did recognise that parents felt the pressure of the points system in order for their children to gain entry to HE. This points to the effects of HE not solely being felt by the individual, but also by the family.

Subsequently, the White Paper (1995) *Charting our Education Future*, presented a vision for the education system and equality featured heavily within the document. The White Paper (1995) employed words like seeking to ‘eliminate’ and ‘promotion of equality’, this signalled a potential move to a more rights based and target setting approach and was influenced by the Report of the National Education Convention by John Coolahan (1994). The underpinning philosophy of the White Paper (1995) sought “to promote equality of access, participation and benefit for all in accordance with their needs and abilities” (p. 8). It is evident in the White Paper (1995) that following the “reforms in the 1960s equality of opportunity in Irish education had typically been described in terms of access” (Fleming et al, 2022, p. 445). The White Paper (1995) emphasised the access to education agenda with a focus on equality:

To promote quality and equality for all, including those who are disadvantaged, through economic, social, physical, and mental factors, in the development of their full educational potential (p. 12).

Specifically in relation to the future of HE, “the promotion of equality is paramount” (p. 92). Within the role of the HEA as set out in the White Paper (1995) one of the main responsibilities of the Authority was to ensure “that all HE institutions put into effect policies which promote equality of access, participation and benefit for students and as appropriate, the wider community” (p. 98). Does the family feature here and could it be considered part of the wider community?

The White Paper (1995) went on to identify the socialisation function, and the intergenerational effect education can provide which can be seen as an implicit acknowledgement of the family as demonstrated in the following statement:

The policy making framework should embrace the intellectual and cultural heritage of the past, the knowledge, beliefs, values and traditions transformed and transmitted through succeeding generations (p. 8).

This quote is important because it is a recognition of past generations, in relation to learning and educational values and hints that policy should capitalise on this. While not explicit, it is

acknowledging the family as a key learning site, where the transmission of values and beliefs occurs, “social apparatus” by which this process of knowledge transference occurs (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 70). The family is specifically mentioned within the partnership section of the White Paper (1995) and parents are referred to as partners in education along with “patrons/trustees, owners, governors, management bodies, teachers, the local community and the state” (p. 9). The paper further sets out the responsibilities parents have and the role they should play in providing a nurturing learning environment and to “fulfil their special role in the development of the child” (p. 11). The White Paper (1995) also states “the role of the family in the child’s development remains central up to and into adulthood” (p. 11), suggesting that the role of parents in their child’s education should continue to HE and further reflected in the statement that “the government is committed to promoting the active participation of parents at every level of the education process” (p. 150). The role of parents in HE has been ignored or misunderstood in Ireland, unlike for example in Massachusetts Institute of Technology⁹ (MIT) where parents are fully embedded within their children’s HE experience. There is a dedicated portal for parents, they are viewed as an integral part of the MIT community, involved in volunteering, family weekends, athletic events and are invited to lectures.

Many of the key points contained in The Green Paper on Adult Education (1998) and White Paper on Lifelong learning (2000) originated in the White Paper 1995. The White Paper 1995 called for a coherent adult education policy framework at national and regional policy levels (p. 85). Within the White Paper (1995) all institutions providing vocational education and training and adult and continuing education “will operate policies which promote equality of access, participation, and benefit for students and for the wider community” (p. 87). The following section focuses on the LLL agenda and specifically examines the Green Paper 1998 on Adult Education and the White Paper 2000 on “Adult education, Learning for Life”.

Lifelong learning was identified as a central theme in the Report of the Commission on Adult Education (1984) (The Kenny Report). The Irish education system in the 1980’s was under severe pressure, as the demand for provision at all levels increased and the ability to fulfil its lifelong learning agenda fell afoul of the economic climate of the time (O’Sullivan, 2005). The Kenny Report (1984) noted that there was one third of the adult population who had left education under the age of fourteen; these now adults were still living in society (Slowey, 2012). The White Paper - “Education Charting our Education Future” (1995) discussed “lifelong learning and continuous retraining and updating of skills” (p.79) but prioritised the

⁹ <https://parents.mit.edu/s/1314/bp19/home.aspx?gid=31&pgid=49601>

standardised delivery of education across the life course with its main focus on 'the preparation for life'. There was a renewed effort to foster growth in the LLL agenda when Ireland held the European Presidency from July to December 1996, because one of its main educational objectives was lifelong learning. The EU Commission marked the Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) with the publication of the Strategy for Lifelong Learning. Concurrently the OECD asserted Lifelong learning as one of the governing principles of Education which formed some of the pretexts to the Green Paper (1998). Within the Green Paper on Adult education (1998) reference was made to educational disadvantage and underachievement linking it to socio-economic profiles and the intergenerational influence of educational attainment. It identified the critical role of learning within the family home and the role and influence of parental education levels, as evidenced below.

Parental levels of education, particularly those of mothers, exert a critical influence on their children's participation in education and on their school performance. A focus on adult and second chance education, including special supports for lone parents, is therefore needed to break the inter-generational cycle of disadvantage (DES, 1998, p. 27).

This is critical as it draws out several key points of importance; the role of the mother in education, the focus on adult education and its capacity to break cycles of educational disadvantage. Rubenson (1998) identified the fundamental attributes of lifelong learning within the Green Paper (1998) and this was reproduced in the White Paper (2000 p. 32) albeit with no reference to Rubenson (1998) as Irish policy makers failed to acknowledge his contribution in The White Paper (2000). The three fundamental attributes of lifelong learning were identified (DES, 1998, p. 19) (see below).

Green Paper on Adult Education: Adult Education in an era of Lifelong Learning (1998)

1. Lifelong
2. Lifewide
3. Motivation

(Rubenson, 1998 cited in the Green Paper on Adult Education DES, (1998)

The three fundamental attributes of lifelong learning in the White Paper 2000 are documented below.

White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life (2000)

1. Lifelong
2. Lifewide

3. Voluntary and Self-motivated

Note no reference to Rubenson, (1998)

The third attribute 'Motivation' changed in the White Paper (2000) to include the voluntary aspect of adult education and amended motivation more specifically to self-motivation. Lifelong focused on the transitions between the different levels of the education system and Lifewide "recognises the multiplicity of learning influences and sites outside the formal education system" (DES, 1998, p. 19; DES, 2000 p. 32, p. 73). While not specifically mentioned in the Green Paper as a site outside the formal education system, 'the family home' was clearly identified in the White Paper on Adult Education (2000) under the lifewide dimension:

With regard to adult learning it encompasses the school or other conventional educational institutions, training centres, the home ... (p. 32).

Within the White Paper (2000) there was a clear commitment to the LLL agenda "as an educational continuum from the cradle to the grave, with open boundaries between the worlds of home/work/education..." (p.30). It also notes that "further research on best practice in parental involvement" (p.61) is required. The 'open boundaries' referred to above provide a critical link between gaining access to HE for adults and a realisation that education also occurs for adults within the home (Azaola, 2020; Rios Aguilar & Kiyama, 2017; Kiyama 2010; Moll et al., 1992; Kiyama & Rios -Aguilar, 2018). It also highlights that adult education can and does have a major impact on children's education, this acknowledgment has not always been forthcoming in the standard HE policies or documentation. The Recommendation no. R (99)3 of the Committee of Ministers to Members States on Access to HE in 1999 reinforces this point and suggested that parental influence on children's education is a more accurate indicator of progression through the (educational) system rather than occupational level or socio-economic class (Council of Europe, 1999, p. 3; Fleming & Gallagher, 2003, p. 17; Fleming & Finnegan, 2011).

Just as the Kenny report of 1984 emphasised and subsequently noted in the OECD (2004) report came to some of the same conclusions, that HE provision in Ireland is dominated by the 18-23yrs age categories and that older members of the population had been largely ignored. The OECD (2004) report also referred to the degree to which Irish Universities were also dominated by the managerial and professional socio-economic classes. They suggested a refocusing of efforts to increase the numbers of mature students in HE. They also emphasised that the binary system which exists in HE between the Institutes of Technology and Universities has meant that the IOTs have been on the front line of the widening participation agenda (OECD, 2004). The report did not recommend IOTs become Universities and in fact

was in opposition to this proposal, specifically recommending that for the foreseeable future there would be “no further institutional transfers into the University sector” (OECD, 2004, p.22). Further noting:

We do not believe that location in a designated regional Gateway provides a justification for the transfer of an institute to university status; indeed we think it is essential that the applied focus which their current differentiation of mission prescribes for their role in regional Gateways is preserved and utilised to the full (OECD, 2004, p.20).

The report also clearly asserted that “Ireland should retain a differentiated tertiary education system” it recognised the complementary nature of the roles played by the IOTs and the University sector (OECD, 2004, p.20). This was because the role played by IOTs in the development of local economies and in the noteworthy, applied nature of the courses offered, reinforcing the link between education and the economy. This report is significant in light of the recent creation of the Technological Universities sector which is in stark opposition to recommendations of the OECD in 2004.

There was notable concern with the Green Paper 1998 in that many lobbied against the overarching ‘focus on the economic’ in the Green Paper (Aontas) and this did translate into the White Paper but thankfully in a more diluted version. In the White Paper (2000) there was an appreciation for the inclusion of community education, which had been perceived as an invisible aspect of adult education previously (Fleming, 2001). Another key area identified was adult literacy, within the White Paper (2000) there was funding assigned but unfortunately it became evident there was not “the political will to actually give the funding to implement the many proposals within the literacy programme” (Bailey as cited in Fleming, 2001, p. 30). Unfortunately many of the aspirational objectives in the White Paper (2000) were just that, since it did not contain specific proposals on the implementation of the various initiatives contained within it. There was an identified fault line “a gap between aspiration, policy and structures” and it was also concerning “the close connection between the state and the economy is troubling to those who see adult education with an important agenda over and above supporting economic development” (Fleming, 2001, p. 34). The economic focus must have been very troubling for the adult educators who continually supported the emancipatory and transformational effects of education rather than solely economic imperatives of the time. The next section will examine the Action Plan “Achieving Equity of Access to HE in Ireland 2005-2007” which followed from the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000a) and the National Development Plan (2000b) both policy documents stressed the need for a group to examine, access to HE. The Action Group on Access to HE

(Department of Education and Science, 2001) was established and focused on groups which had been marginalised in the HE system and made a series of recommendations to rectify the situation. The recommendation which had the greatest impact was their recommendation for a National Office for Equity of Access to HE. This was an office within the HEA, which directed funding to promote equity of access.

“Achieving equity of access to HE in Ireland: Action Plan, 2005-2007” recognised the need for a systems based approach for lifelong learning, one between key stakeholders who were identified as including parents and lifelong learning:

...policy makers, educators, social partners, parents and learners into transforming our present education system into one that values all members of our society equally, aims to provide the best education for all, makes the ideal of lifelong learning a reality (p. 10).

The equity of access to HE is noted in the plan as being a critical component in the education system as a whole and in the furthering of the access agenda with the input and commitment from the above stakeholders from “pre-school through primary, second level and further and HE ” (p. 15). This was interesting because the Action plan brings parents into the process and through all education levels including HE. It makes note of partnerships “between sectors will be promoted as well as pro-active links with parents, ...”(p. 16), thus bringing parents in as partners in the education process, this was an important improvement. Within the national plan it stated that:

The concept of lifelong learning which aims to provide a pathway through the education system from the cradle to the grave, with open doors between the home, work and education (p. 15).

The plan fails to address how students will navigate their way through them, including into and out of the home. While it makes reference to the home, it is an aspirational dimension to this policy, as the family or home was not explored in any detail. The next section will examine the National Strategy for HE (2011) and the document “Towards a Future HE Landscape” (2012) in order to position the institution where this research was carried out and to examine if the family had been included or considered in the development of the reports. The next section documents two reports which were integral to the establishment of the Technological University sector.

The introduction Section 1.3 provided a brief background to the current landscape of HE and the position of the Institute of Technology where this research was undertaken, which is now

a Technological University. The origins of HE in Ireland was firmly embedded within religious and political divisions well into the twentieth century (Walsh, 2018). Ireland had a university dominated system until the middle of the 1960s with “over 85% of students attending Universities” (Walsh, 2018, p. 28). The Regional Technical colleges (RTCs) presented offerings of a more vocationally driven focus (Clancy, 1989). This would have been in stark opposition to the views of Newman on Universities when he discussed the University in *The Discourses, on the Scope and Nature of University Education* (1852). He distinctly “conceptualized the University as a place for intellectual formation and the cultivation of knowledge rather than training for the professions or vocational preparation for a useful function in society” (Walsh, 2018, p. 2). There was a distinct change when Eamon De Valera (1882-1975) in the 1940s spoke of the necessity for HE to provide for a ‘professional career’ one that they can sustain an individual for a prolonged period (Walsh, 2018). According to Highman (2019) there was a demand for vocational education and to some degree the RTCs became what the Universities were not, practical and applied, Universities for the head and RTCs for the hands. In 1997 the RTCs were renamed Institutes of Technology. This “binary divide” or “binary system” presented a hierarchy between the University and the IOT sectors (Highman, 2019; McCoy & Smith, 2010). In 2004 the OECD pointed to this hierarchy and posited that not only should the diversity of missions between Universities and IOTs be commended but that the “the university sector is not seen as conferring lower status but defining it as an equal partner in a dynamic HE system” (OECD, 2004, p. 20). While previously alluded to in Chapter 1 the roots of the Institutes of Technology lie in the Regional Technical colleges and also in what they were not, a university.

The origins of the Technological University agenda were located within the Hunt Report (HEA, 2011) and the follow up report *Towards a Future HE* (2012). Walsh and Loxley (2015) commented that the Hunt Report was “one of many in a long line of official reports and governmental initiatives, which promote a reorientation of HE to serve broadly utilitarian objectives” (p. 1128). Nonetheless these reports have proven to be significant policy documents and with the correct political will to drive them, they have made their mark on Irish HE. The continued and accelerated reorientation of the system to serve the economic interests of the state did dominate the report and sparked criticism among academics who believed that HE cannot solely exist to serve the economic needs of a society (Walsh & Loxley, 2015).

The current organisation of the Technological Universities in Ireland at present 2023, is made up of five TUs, Munster Technological University (MTU) previously Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee, Atlantic Technological University (ATU)

previously Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Sligo, South East Technological University (SETU) previously Institute of Technology Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology, Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) previously Institute of Technology Tallaght, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Dublin Institute of Technology, and Technological University of the Shannon Midlands and Midwest previously Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology. It must be noted that both Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) and Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT) still sit outside the TU landscape. At present IADT is pursuing a European University of the Arts agenda and Dundalk's position is unclear. Within the TU Act 2018 there was a provision for an IOT to join an established TU under section 38 of the TU Act 2018 Chapter 11, both institutions may consider this option in the future.

The Hunt report (2011) has been quite a significant policy document: it is very scathing of the progress of the lifelong learning agenda in Ireland.

There remains significant challenges in this area: successive reports have recognised the relatively poor performance of our system in the area of lifelong learning, while the requirement for upgrading and changing of employee skills and competencies is becoming ever greater (p.7).

There were many recommendations around LLL within the Hunt report (2011) but unfortunately the family did not feature. Families were mentioned in relation to a discussion around the future funding of HE. It is acknowledged within the Hunt report (2011, p.111) that parents and students pay for HE highlighting the economic role which the family plays in HE (Ahier, 2000; Christie & Munro, 2003; West et al., 2015). It did not identify or acknowledge parents as key stakeholders but rather returns to the human capital debate and “articulates and reinforces the overarching theme of the ‘knowledge economy’ agenda, which has dominated Irish policy making in HE for three decades” (Walsh & Loxley, 2015, p. 129; Loxley et al., 2014).

Towards a Future HE Landscape (2012) a follow up report to the *Hunt Report* (2011) proposed compacts between the HEA and IOTs and the proposed technological universities; there was no mention of the key stakeholders, either students or their parents. These compacts discussed in the 2012 landscape document can find their origins in many places. They originated in America in the 1980s the first of which was the Boston compact of 1982, the main focus of this compact was the linkage or compact between education and work (Murphy & Fleming, 2003, p. 26; Silver, 1990). For example, it was an agreement with an employer and

a student and if they achieved certain criteria in their studies this guaranteed the student work experience or further employment. In the UK compacts were introduced in 1988 aimed at increasing the employability of young people in secondary school and further education. *The Dearing Report* of 1997 a UK based report, asserted that its objectives were to make “recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of HE, including support for students should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years” (Dearing, 1997, p. 1). It identified the establishment of compacts between the key stakeholders, the family included:

...establishing a new compact between society, as represented by the Government, students and their families, employers and providing institutions (Dearing, 1997, p. 282).

The Dearing Report (1997) conducted by the National Committee of Inquiry into HE, focused on HE and its role in promoting and to a large extent producing a learning society with a focus on lifelong learning. It clearly identified the family as a principal stakeholder throughout the report as “taxpayers, students and their families, graduates, employers and institutions themselves” (p.263), reinforcing the role and influence of the family at a macro level in England, because it incorporated the family into the process and outlined its importance for the future of HE in the UK. According to Bill (1998), the *Dearing Report* recommendations lacked understanding in regard to what actually needed to be done. He pointed to some useful noises which it makes, but it is disappointing with regards to the recommendations on lifelong learning and that it focused on the full time traditional students, they certainly did not “envisage the extend of cultural change which is needed” (Bill, 1998, p. 294). The fact that the *Dearing Report* included families in its conversation was important but it unfortunately did not ripple over the Irish sea, in an Irish policy context, as families are still not considered key stakeholders in *The Hunt Report* (2011) or in *Towards a future HE landscape* (2012).

Three partner institutions of DIT, ITT and ITB which as previously stated above and in Chapter 1 became Technological University Dublin in 2019. In 2014 prior to engaging in the TU4Dublin process they submitted as required by the HEA their mission based performance compacts separately to the HEA. I undertook an analysis of the submitted compacts to the HEA for the year 2014, it was evident that they largely ignored the family and parents in their compacts in both their influence and as key stakeholders. ITT did mention the family but only with reference to a guide for parents of students from Brazil. IADT which were not part of the consortium listed above they had the foresight to include parents in their compact and the role in which they play in the decision to attend HE. IADT’s position to include parents in their compact for submission to the HEA reinforces the work of McCoy and Byrne (2011). However,

the National Access plan for equity of access to HE (2015) takes a notable step because the family begins to make a more noteworthy appearance in the Access Plan (2015).

The National Plan for Equity of Access to HE (2015) target groups were:

1. Entrants from socio-economic groups that have low participation in HE.
2. First time, mature student entrants.
3. Students with disabilities.
4. Part-time/flexible learners.
5. Further education award holders.
6. Irish Travellers. (p 34)

As the National Access Plans have progressed through the years they have become more differentiated, as more specific target groups have been added to the priorities. The recognition of first-generation learners and the impact of FGF learning, was identified by the national plan for equity of access to HE 2015-2019 (2015), in an important move away from a purely socio-economic classification of students who require predominantly economic assistance in HE:

For a student who has no family history of participating in HE, or who comes from a community or school background where there are very low expectations of accessing HE, the decision to go to college can be a very difficult one. Students in such situations require particular support and advice on the value of HE and on a whole range of more practical issues (2015, p.18).

In discussing FGS it brought a more fine grained lived experience perspective to the National Plan (2015) and embedded a more qualitative slant on the metrics with the introduction of words like ‘expectations’ and made reference to the ‘practical’ barriers FGS face. This gave credence to the cultural dimensions of HE participation by first generation students at a practical and policy level. Parents were also identified within the national plan as stakeholders in the process, more specifically “The National Parents Council (NPC) post primary is a key stakeholder in this respect and are represented on the advisory group to the HEA National Access Office” (2015, p. 18). This represents a policy shift and a key step in the long overdue process where family and parents are acknowledged to some degree within HE policy. The National Access Plan (2022) goes further in this regard and aims to fully embed the family within its focus.

The National Access Plan 2022 included both qualitative and quantitative indicators which are extremely important because while numerical targets are essential, it is also important to

engage with the lived experiences of students. This plan specifies five target areas some of which they have base line data on and others they do not and will have to monitor these new target areas closely (2022). The National Access Plan (2022) states “we focus strongly on tangible progress in equity of access for these groups and their families and communities” (p.20). This quote emphasises the liquid HE effects, in that it acknowledges that the access of one student to HE will have an effect on not only the family but on their community also. In the context of flexible learning the Plan (2022) notes that many individuals, particularly those from lower-income families or disadvantaged groups, “may not be in a position to engage full-time in HE or may need to engage in a way that more flexibly meets their needs” (p.47). As previously mentioned, this is important because it notes their distinctive needs should be met by the institutions. It is the institutions who must adapt not the learners trying to fit into an institution devised for full-time students with no caring responsibilities (Thomas & Quinn, 2007) or giving students access but not providing any supports for them is not an opportunity (Tinto, 2012).

We can see evidence of further differentiation in this Plan (2022) as they include more specific underrepresented groups’, of notable interest are the following groups which have never been previously mentioned. These are students who have experienced homelessness, have experience of the criminal justice system, are lone parents or teen parents or are carers. These categories are important in light of this research because many of the family members who engaged in this research came from multiple target populations and this points to the intersectionality of experiences when setting target groups. The other target priority areas of mature students had been included previously but not students specifically who had attended HE but did not complete the course. This is also an important because many FGS’s may have tried HE and for multiple reasons did not complete it, in the plan they are referred to as ‘second time’ or final chance mature students (Fleming & Finnegan, 2011). There was also a move within the plan to a more intersectional approach to HE inclusion and an understanding of people “life situations “and places emphasis on the lived experiences of students “each person has their own barriers to contend with” (p.23). The acknowledgement of people’s life situations is a recognition of the varied nature of lived everyday experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) of students and how these experiences can have an impact on an individual’s capacity to engage with HE or not. Embedded within this plan was an attempt at a rigorous monitoring of a multitude of action points, this could be perceived as an attempt to force HEIs to follow through on access agenda or a continuation of the managerialist state since the late 1990s. In the next section the HEA Act 2022 which proposes some significant changes to the governance of HE will be examined along with several other proposals one of

which is a strategy for unified tertiary education system, this was also one of the recommendations in the OECD report in 2004.

The HEA Act 2022 presents a reform of the governance of HE, under the act pertinent to this research are the following provisions for the preparation, review and amendment of a strategy for tertiary education; to provide for better engagement with students and equity of access to, and participation and the promotion of success in HE, lifelong and flexible learning (HEA Act 2022, p. 11). It presented changes to the composition of the Governing Bodies and ultimately this act gives more power to the HEA and the Governing Bodies of HE institutions. The impact of this legislation is yet to be understood but the recent launch of the national Tertiary Office within the HEA jointly led by SOLAS and HEA aims to deliver a unified tertiary education system for Ireland. This has been an overarching aim of FET sector and Aontas which in their submission for the National Plan for Equity of Access to HE 2022-2026 made a recommendation to “take a tertiary wide approach to educational access” (Aontas, 2021, p. 5). While this integration and clear paths between further and HE was very welcomed across the FET and HE sector, the funding allocation may need to be revisited if this is to come to fruition. The next section will briefly pause to contemplate why families should be included in HE policies and propose one potential explanation as to why the family has been invisible to date.

A pause! Why should families be included in HE policies?

It is ironic to note that given the importance of parental and familial involvement in education, which is well documented, families are given a marginal position in HE policy. McCoy and Byrne’s (2011) research clearly identified why parents and families should be included in policies and emphasised the influence the family plays on the decision to attend HE. Another reason is the influence of parental HE qualifications on their children’s aspirations for HE participation, this role and influence cannot be underestimated. Their research on barriers to HE access in Ireland draws on a comprehensive study which incorporates 10 years of school leaver’s survey data and also includes in-depth life history interviews with school leavers who were classified by their parental occupation which was the non-manual category. They concluded with an outstanding point that:

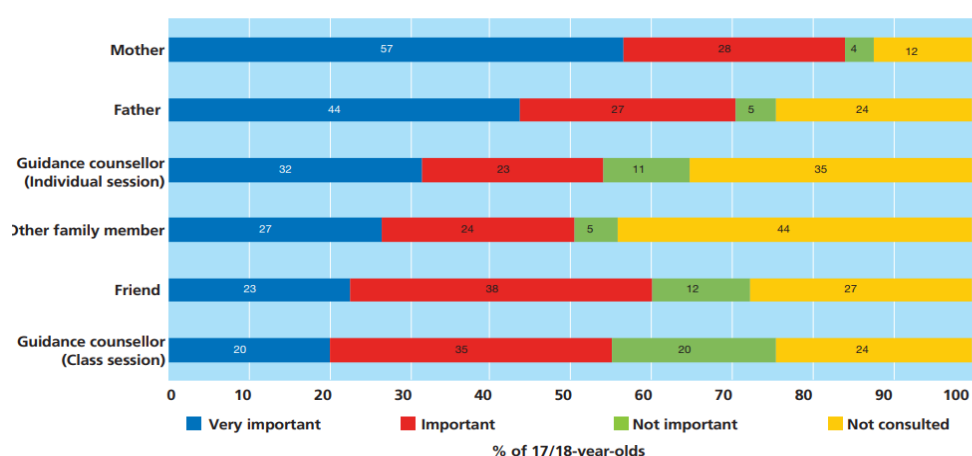
Parental education is important because those whose parents have degree level education are six times more likely to make the transition (to HE) than a person with the same characteristics whose parents have primary- level education (McCoy & Byrne, 2011, p. 147).

Many of the students in their study who did not progress to HE stated that 'college is not for me' was a decision heavily influenced by the family pressure to contribute economically to the family unit and not pursue something that may give them long term financial viability (McCoy & Byrne, 2011, p. 149). Many of the parents in their study did not push their children to pursue higher levels of education and instead were dominated by the 'child as expert' discourse. This was discussed by Reay and Ball (1998b), in which the decision to attend HE the parents defers to the child, they (the child) are the ones who know what is best for themselves (the child) and not what the parent(s) think. They also firmly note in their conclusion that it was the family who made the decision to attend HE "...educational choices that different families can and will make" (McCoy & Byrne, 2011, p. 155; Brooks 2003, 2004; Archer et al., 2003, Turner 2020; Moogan & Baron, 2003; Mwangi, 2015; London 1989; Smyth, Banks & Calvert, 2011, Cooper, 2017; Phulphagar & Keane, 2020).

Internationally, Marginson (2015) summarised the impact of parental education on the likelihood of HE participation. He deduced using OECD data that in Italy and Poland a student with at least one parent who has a HE qualification was 9.5 times more likely to attend a HEI. In the United States students from tertiary educated families were 6.8 times more likely to go on to HE compared to students who had no history of familial HE participation. In comparison to Germany, Austria and Japan the figure was 5.1, for Ireland the figure was 3.3 which is contrast to the findings of McCoy and Byrne (2011) above. Their research seems more in line with the figures from the UK and US, which is that if a student had a parent with a degree they are six times more likely to attend a HEI (Pires & Chapin, 2022).

In the national longitudinal study of children "Growing up in Ireland; The lives of 17/18 year olds cohort '98" was published in 2020 (Fig 2.2) and it showed a number of key findings pertinent to the decision about what to do after secondary school. Interestingly 88% of the cohort consulted their mothers, while 76% of the participants consulted their fathers and 56% consulted another family member. A mother's help was deemed to be the most important source of help. The decision of what to do after secondary school was heavily influenced by family members.

Figure 4.13: Young people's rating of the importance of their career guidance counsellor, friend, mother, father and another family member in their career decisions



Note: Margins of error are, at most, $\pm 2.5\%$ for these responses.

Fig 2. 2 GUI 2020 Young People and Career Decisions

Parental expectations were also noted in the study and these were also directly related to the parents own educational level. The higher the education level the higher the expectation that their child would go to HE. To ignore familial influence in the creation of the TU sector, in the familial choice and influence to attend HE or sometimes familial role to dissuade HE attendance, influence nonetheless (Mitchall & Jaeger, 2018) was short-sighted. The next section will examine the family and HE policy.

The Family in Ireland: Part religious construct and part Pandora's Box.

Considering the aforementioned influence of the Catholic Church on the family and on education, the question which needs to be addressed specifically in relation to this research is, why has the family been invisible in HE policy until relatively recently. This section will present some potential answers. Firstly, more often than not, religion was inextricably linked and associated with primary and secondary schooling. While at the same time for most, religion and the family were interlinked and co-existed in Irish social life (Inglis, 1998).

Walsh (2018) demonstrated that the Catholic Church functioned not merely as a religious body but as a foundational institutional actor shaping the ideological, structural and governance underpinnings of higher education and the Irish state. He examined how between 1922 and 2016 universities, teacher training colleges and emerging institutes developed in a policy environment where Church and state negotiated authority over the curriculum, governance and staff appointments and where Catholic actors used their institutional presence to embed a distinctive moral and cultural project in HE (Walsh, 2018). In this account HE is not purely secular, it is a key site where Catholic understandings of personhood,

vocation, gender, and citizenship were reproduced, seeking to embed the formation of graduates within the ecclesial vision of social order and family life (Walsh, 2018). The influence of the Catholic Church was mainly felt in universities, particularly the National University of Ireland after 1909. While Trinity College Dublin and the National University of Ireland were formally non-denominational each operated with a distinctive religious and cultural setting well into the mid twentieth century. It would also be the case that the Catholic Church positioned itself as the guardian of the family's place in education (Walsh, 2018).

Fuller's (2002) analysis of Irish Catholicism since 1950 illuminates how the Church's moral and doctrinal authority extended well beyond educational institutions to shape social norms around sexuality, marriage and kinship. She argues that the Church operated as a pervasive cultural power sustaining a dense culture of piety, in which expectations about gender roles, marriage reproduction and respectability were mediated through the parish structures, lay movements, catholic schooling and the mass media. The family was not just a private unit but a privileged locus where Catholic ideals of obedience and sacrifice were enacted and where the conformity to the Church teachings were reinforced by either social approval or sanction. For a significant part of the twentieth century, this moral regime underpinned legal and policy choices around issues such as divorce, contraception and maternal employment. The Church's doctrinal vision of the family was inscribed into the normative frameworks of Irish society (Fuller, 2002).

At the level of universal doctrine papal encyclicals and related magisterial texts have been central in defining what 'the family' should be and therefore offering a template against which Catholic societies and policy makers have ordered family life. In 1965 *Gaudium et spes* which was produced at the Second Vatican Council offered a very pastoral tone when it described the family as a community of life and love but it still emphasised that marriage as the normative foundation of family life and the primary setting for the raising of children. One of the most influential texts in this regard is *Humanae Vitae* (1968) which reaffirmed the Church's teaching that marriage should be open to the possibility of children and rejected the use of contraception. It was framed in a moral and pastoral way but the document had wide social consequences, it reinforced the association between Catholic identity, marital stability and large family size. John Paul II's *Familiaris consort* (1981) it reinforced a clearly defined family model, heterosexual marriage, long-term stability and differentiated parental responsibilities. This filtered down into everyday life in the form of Catholic schooling, marriage preparation courses all of which helped to fully embed this vision of the family and Catholic Ireland.

Walsh (2008) discussed the pamphlet *Have the Snakes come back?* (1975), explaining that the pamphlet was produced during the controversy over the “management of new community schools established by the Irish state” (Walsh, 2008, p. 416). The pamphlet reinforced the central role of the family in the Catholic Church and it was extremely “hostile to any significant state intervention in education” (Walsh, 2008, p. 424). It perceived the community schools as part of the secularisation process of education. The pamphlet was critical of UNESCO and claimed that its work aimed:

To undermine the family's essential function as an educator; it sought to make the state, rather than the family, the major influence on children; UNESCO saw the school as a battle-ground, in which the state would fight the home for possession of the mind of the child and ‘the earlier they got the child the better’ (Vera Verba 1975, p.25 as cited in Walsh 2008).

If the home was positioned as a battle ground in relation to education through the years because of the role and influence of the Catholic Church in education, the family to some degree became invisible from a HE policy perspective. It was loaded, complicated and contentious and viewed as connected to the Catholic Church. It was straight forward from an educational policy perspective, to shift to a relationship between HE and the individual and not the family.

Secondly the family could also be invisible in HE policy because the students in HE are adults and the presumption is that the family no longer has an influence over them and their educational pursuits. The implications of this could potentially be when policy formation was undertaken by the government it was easier to ignore the family than to include them. The quote above (Vera Verba 1975, p.25 as cited in Walsh, 2008) does acknowledge the influence of the family on its children during the primary socialisation process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This discussion above poses another consideration because historically HE has been solely entangled with notions of individualism and education, as stated previously students atomised from their families and communities. The shift towards individualism in HE centres on the idea that education should enhance the development of each individual student. This individualistic approach contrasts with a more collectivist educational tradition of the past. One that prioritises communal learning and societal values over individual achievement, this shift towards individualism can be traced back to the Renaissance (Salmon, 1987) and the Enlightenment periods (Pagden, 2015) which fostered personal inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge (McMahon, 2009; Marginson, 2016) which therefore had an impact on HE. Observations by Olsen and Peters, (2005) question whether the HE emphasis on individualism truly serves educational objectives or if it inadvertently perpetuates broader

inequalities. Neoliberalism has forced Universities to operate like corporate entities, which produce economically valuable transferable knowledge and skills, within a society dominated by the knowledge economy, where Universities are the engines contributing to economic competitiveness (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Education is seen as a personal investment for personal economic gain rather than any form of collective societal endeavour. This then poses the question if students then pursue genuine personal interest in subjects to study or are driven by market imperatives where employment is guaranteed (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This focus on the individual has permeated HE and as a result atomised the student from their families and communities and from the true value of education both for the common good and individually. The discussion above poses important questions about the family and education in general in Ireland, more specifically HE and the absence of the family in policy.

Conclusion

The family has been neglected within the majority of HE policy and plans and the various policy agendas have in part played a role in the dyadic first-generation pairs in HE. This chapter navigated chronologically as far as possible from 1965 to the most recent HEA act of 2022. Origins of the LL agenda and access were discussed, running like a thread through this chapter was to affirm the absence of the family as a consideration in HE policy formation and publication. Even though the family and HE was explicitly outside religious settings they were both shaped by how families were imagined, governed and evaluated, forming a very important religious backdrop to the educational and social systems within which this thesis is situated. These policy agendas have had a positive impact on many families in Ireland and their journeys to HE, which may have given rise to an unintended group of HE participants “the intergenerational family”. The next Chapter 3 will examine literature pertinent to the research questions and will focus on FGS, the transition to HE and various theoretical insights from the literature.

CHAPTER 3 THE LITERATURE REVIEW: PART 1 -THE FAMILY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

"The Family Reunion":

In an old house there is always listening,
and more is heard than is spoken.

And what is spoken remains in the room,
waiting for the future to hear it.

And whatever happens began in the past,
and presses hard on the future.

The agony in the curtained bedroom,
whether of birth or of dying,

Gathers in to itself all the voices of the past,
and projects them into the future.

Elliott (1939, p. 93)

3.1 Introduction

T.S. Eliot's (1939) 'The Family Reunion' captured the essence of the family's collective experiences and memory. It illuminated the powerful force of the intergenerational effects and the value of knowledge. It emphasises place and the role the informal sphere of the home, the hold it has on the family members both inter and intra-generationally. The focus on experience is important to consider because "[it] is undertheorized in educational thinking" (Fleming, 2023). One assumption within HE policy and research lies in the common discourse that HE resides within the individual and is experienced by an individual atomized from their familial and relational contexts. This research aimed to unearth and explore the family experiences of HE, the potential collective re-socialisation into HE the families undergo and the HE liquid effects, which also explores the family's ability or not to activate a mycorrhizal role, this will be examined in Chapter 10, (The Discussion). The space in-between HE and the individual student will be argued, is the family because the

family lies in the liminal space, where the individual and HE collide, that is why as part of this chapter there is a discussion on the 'in-between'.

This chapter draws on pertinent research which speak to the research question "What are the experiences of FGF with an intergenerational dyadic pair, engaging in HE?" Thematic literature groupings are explored over Chapters 3 and Chapter 4. This Chapter is divided into three sections, The first section will examine FGSs, the terminology, experience and the barriers experienced to HE. The second section will examine the transition to HE under three sub-headings: 1) the linguistic, 2) the geographic and 3) the in-between with relevance to FGSs. The final section examines some significant theoretical insights (Bourdieu effect, Funds of knowledge and family capital theory) employed within the literature and of relevance to this research.

3.2 First Generation students (FGS)

3.2.1 Terminology

For the purposes of this research FGSs will be considered as "those for whom the responsible older generation (not necessarily birth parents) have not had any opportunity at any time in their lives to experience University education" (Thomas & Quinn, 2007, p. 64-65). 'First in family' (FIF) will be defined for the purposes of this research as "being the first in the family means that no one, including parents, siblings, partners and children, have previously attained a university qualification" (O'Shea, 2019, p. 3). This definition directs the focus to the students "who do not have access to significant others within the household to ask questions about university or from whom they can seek necessary institutional 'insider' knowledge" (O'Shea, 2019, p. 3; Crozier et al., 2008; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). When the terminology of FGS is employed, instead of a purely socio-economic emphasis on personal income, or social class, the term denotes something else. Referring to FGS shifts the emphasis from money and occupation (Lower Social class, non-traditional student), to education, culture and the family. It would be a significant improvement if the experiences of students from lower socio-economic groups were viewed in a more holistic way, taking into consideration the experiential and cultural aspects of their lives. In reorienting the focus this way it may also highlight the role the family plays in facilitating the social mobility of its members (Brooks & O'Shea, 2021; Willis, 1977; Mac Leods, 1995; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Reay et al., 2010; Lehmann, 2014; Holdsworth, 2009; Rodríguez-Hernández et al., 2020; Loveday, 2015; O'Shea, 2014; 2019; Vryonides & Lamprianou, 2013; Webb, 2019).

Perceptions of education vary among individuals occupying different socio-economic positions and they are influenced by the cultural values of their social class, which may lead them to being positively or negatively predisposed to education (Apple, 1982). This implies that there are “factors beyond pure economic rationality [...] at play” that of culture, social class reproduction, norms and values, which are held within the family and community about education (West, 1996, p. 4). The concept of non-traditional may also accurately describe the students in this study but the word also has negative associations with HE as something which is not the norm and that they are potentially at a deficit because of their social class (Johnson, 2015). First Generation (FG) as a term, has connotations of breaking boundaries and stresses the emancipatory dimension of the HE experience, FGSs are ‘pathfinders’ (Fleming & Finnegan, 2011, p. 13). FGS’s and FGF will be employed within this research as terms appropriate to capture the role of the intergenerational effects of HE at a micro familial everyday level and not based solely on their social class as their defining feature.

However, the literature on FGS predominantly focuses on them as individuals and not necessarily as part of a collective (Thomas & Quinn, 2007; Connor, 2001; Eveland, 2020; Webb, 2019; London, 1989; Terenzini et al., 1996). When FGS are discussed in the literature there is a recognition of the family, in the word ‘generation’ which ties them intra-generationally and inter-generationally to their lack of familial experience of HE. The family is rarely in focus, it is more on the periphery of the discussion within the literature on FGS. Thomas and Quinn (2007) did provide a focused discussion on the family, social capital and entry to H.E and concluded that for FGSs it is essential to acknowledge their intergenerational ties, they cannot be just considered as atomized from their families.

3.2.2 The FGS Experience in Higher education

It has been noted by Spiegler and Bedmarek, (2013) that FGSs are less likely to persist in HE because they are considered a ‘group at risk’. Previously Tinto argued (1975; 1993), that the backgrounds of students are an essential feature and predictor of both integration and persistence in HE. While Tinto’s (1975; 1993) work is valuable, it has come under some criticism because many of the assertions contained in his work, did not necessarily apply to mature students (Yorke & Knight, 2004) or students in US community colleges (Karp, et al., 2010). In particular students in community colleges were perceived to be time poor and therefore lack the potential for integration. However, Karp et al., (2010) found that in Community college integration is related to persistence but they “refute the notion that integration is unimportant for community colleges” (p.75). Karp, et al., (2010) establish that the integration of students was both academic and social in community colleges. Contrary to many other studies which have employed Tinto’s integration framework (1993) they found

that “these two forms of integration develop in concert for Community College students” in the classroom (p.69). Similarities could be drawn between the community colleges in America and the Institutes of Technology or the Further education sector in Ireland. This comparison could tentatively be made because both focus on, accessibility, inclusiveness, community engagement and are dominated by FGS.

FGSs experience barriers on their entry into HE and are consistently trying to ‘stay in’. Webb (2019) explains “students’ transitions into HE are marked by spontaneous adaptations to work routines, managing crises and the activation of other resources for ‘staying in” (p.529). This involves the students as individuals activating and drawing on their resilience to succeed because the presumption is, that they will not because they are FG and that they are alone. The managing of crises could be understood also as the FGS experiencing a disorienting dilemma which involves “transformative learning points” at an individual level, but Fleming (2023, p. 2) points to the possibility of these dilemmas being social or collective.

Spiegler and Bednarek, (2013) discuss the status of international research on FGS. The issue they raised was that it is very difficult to compare countries in relation to FGS experiences due to the differences in how FGS are defined and the various methods employed in the research. Their second problem is the way FGS problems encountered are identified as individual problems rather than structural HE issues. They make the following recommendation “that structural changes such as making organizational structures in HE institutions more transparent are in order instead of offering special support programmes only for FGS”. There is a need for structural reform to cater fully for FGS (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013 p.318). This would shift the emphasis from the problems residing within the FGS and placing them in the hands of the institutions to “fix” (Thomas & Quinn, 2007).

3.2.3 Barriers for FGS

It has been argued that FGSs navigate a new and unfamiliar territory and must overcome various barriers

Barriers	Literature
Financial	O’Shea, et al., 2018; Phulphagar and Kane, 2020, Indecon, 2021

Caring responsibilities	Gouthro, 2005, Pascall and Cox,1993;Fleming and Finnegan, 2011; Lister, 2003
Relationship management,	Brine and Waller, 2004; Mannay, 2013; Norton et al 1998; Savage and Savage, 2014; Webber, 2015; Finn, 2014;
Linguistic	Ardoin, 2017; Elkins and Hanke, 2018; O'Reilly, 2008, West et al., 2013; Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; Grenfell, 1995; Morek, 2015; Hart and Risley 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Bernstein, 2000; Bourdieu, Passeron and de Saine Martin, 1965; Michaels et. al., 2016; Bourdieu et al, 1994;, Merrill, 2015; Preece, 2015; O'Reilly 2008; West et al 2013; Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; Spiegler and Bednarek, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023; Rowe, 2008.
Cultural	Pascarella et al., 2014; West et al., 2013; Morek, 2015, McEldowney, 2003.
Social class of family	Gofen, 2009; Terenzini et al 1996; Inman and Mayes, 1999; Edwards, 1993

as they make the transition to HE (Patiniotis & Holdsworth 2005; Holdsworth, 2009; McCoy & Byrne, 2011).

Figure 3: Factors that play a role in deciding whether to attend college

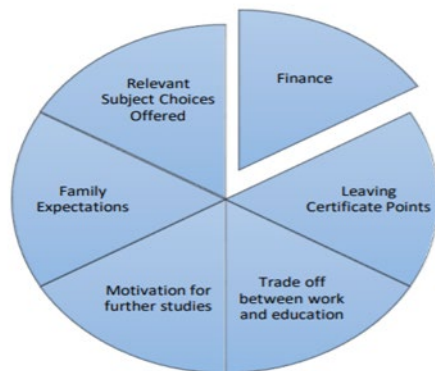
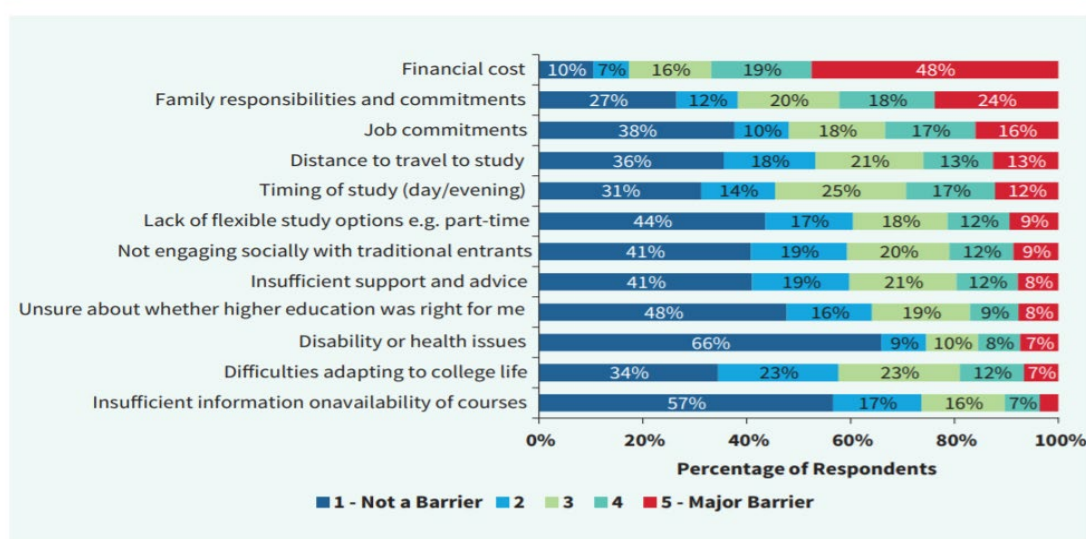


Fig 3. 1 Factors that play a role in deciding whether to attend college: DEPER: Social Impact assessment series, student grant scheme (SUSI) Phulphagar & Kane, 2020, p.10

Of significance for this study is the research of Phulphagar and Keane (2020) who set out the factors which play a role in the decision to attend HE, Fig 3.1, one of which was family expectations. They explain there are many:

Various, interlinked and complex. These include the academic ability, Leaving Certificate points attained in order to get the opportunity to study the specific course, family expectation, motivation for further studies and relevant choices/field of study offered to suit the individual's career path and interest. (Phulphagar & Keane, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2020, p. 9).

They also reported that the SUSI grant scheme only deals with the financial barrier for students, but there are several other characteristics to consider. If family expectations were low then progression to HE was less likely, but when family aspirations or expectations are high then progression to HE is more likely (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2020).



Source: Analysis of Indecon Survey of Current, Former and Potential Mature Students

Fig 3. 2 HEA 2021b Survey of Barriers to participation in HE

In research conducted by Indecon, on behalf of the HEA (2021b) on mature students and the barriers to participation in HE. Financial barriers (Fig 3.2) were considered a major barrier as expected, but 42% of respondents stated family responsibilities were a major impediment to HE participation. Fleming and Finnegan (2011) also identified caring responsibilities as a factor that constrained students and placed “a considerable burden” on them, especially if they were females and in some instances they were discouraged from continuing HE due to “deteriorating family relations” (p.8). Added to this little is known about the impact of HE on the family and home in Ireland.

3.3 The Transition

The transition into HE by FGS, is complicated by a variation in terminology used to describe the process. How the transition to HE is framed has a direct impact on the interpretations of the transition, even for the students themselves. FGS in HE face significant difficulties in navigating the transition to HE and numerous researchers have examined this (Busher & James, 2020; Reay, 2002; Spiegler & Bednarek 2013; O’Shea 2014, 2015, 2019; Collier & Morgan 2008; Katartzi & Hayward; 2019; McCoy & Byrne 2011; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Feinstein et al., 2008; Edwards, 1993; Pascall & Cox, 1993; Webber, 2017; London, 1989). The next section will focus on the linguistic transition FGS students face irrespective of being mature or straight from school.

3.3.1 The Linguistic

The linguistic associations between social class and education have been examined by many authors (Grenfell, 1995; Morek, 2015; Hart & Risley 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Bernstein, 2000; Bourdieu, Passeron & de Saine Martin, 1965; Michaels et. al., 2016; Bourdieu et al, 1994). More specifically researchers have examined the linguistic transition to HE and the role for some which social class has played (Ardoin, 2017, Merrill, 2015; Preece, 2015; O'Reilly 2008; West et al., 2013; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1998; Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013). For instance Bourdieu contended that 'No one acquires a language' and that language should be studied in relation to the relationship from which it is produced (Grenfell & James, 1998). In relation to this research it is the language which was generated and experienced in the home. The findings from Morek (2015) suggests that "being able to provide explanations 'in classroom talk' might also be a question of identificatory compatibility with regard to students' out-of-school interactional experiences and identities" (p. 238). The 'out of school' interactional experiences are formative and have a cumulative influence on their identity formation in relation to their relationship and value placed on language. What language and experiences they have had out of school has a direct implication on how they identify with what is being discussed in the classroom which could also be applicable to HE.

Hart and Risley (2003) in their research highlight the profound impact which social economic status has on language development. Specifically in terms of words acquired by a specific age, by social class, their research revealed the disparity in the number of words children from lower income families were exposed, compared to those from higher income families. They conclude in their seminal work that by age 3 there is a 30 million 'word gap' between high and low income families (Fig 3.3). This word gap emphasises the importance of the home environment as the primary source of linguistic input in the child's life in advance of the school going years. Hoff's (2003) research on maternal speech and early vocabulary development of children emphasised that maternal language was influenced by socio-economic status and shaped early linguistic skills. She is in agreement with Hart and Risley in her findings and notes that "children from more advantaged homes have more advanced language than children of the same age from less advantaged homes" (Hoff, 2003, p. 1376). More specifically she identifies that one "source of the SES related difference in two year old children's vocabulary use" is specifically related to the "speech they hear" (p.1376).

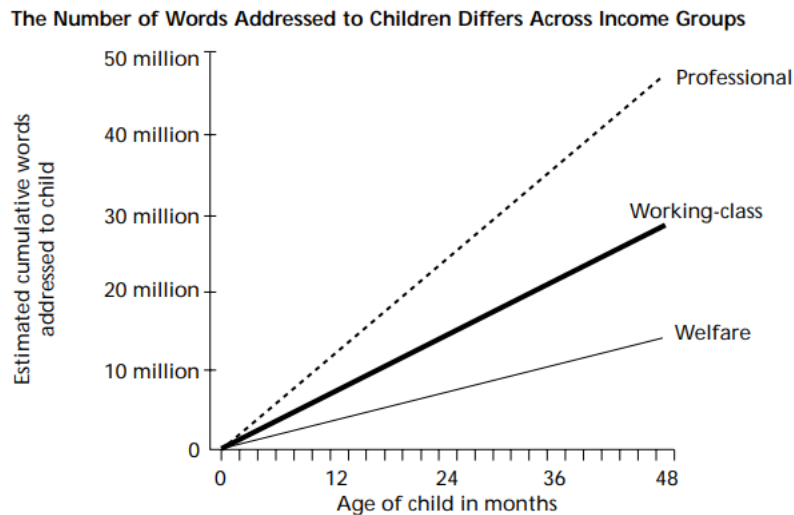


Fig 3. 3 Cumulative Language experiences (Hart & Risley, 2003, p. 116)

Johnson (2015) rejected the 'language gap' and argued that while this research has been disseminated widely it positions low income families and students as deficit, he stated that their research is linguistically false and culturally insensitive. Johnson (2015) argued that word counts alone do not tell the full picture and can serve to blame the victim (the parents):

All the positive socializing practices supportive of linguistic and cognitive development that take place in non-affluent homes are ignored, and any non-normative but constructive forms of thinking and communicating that exist in non-affluent communities are devalued (p.47).

Taking into consideration Johnson's (2015) points, there are linguistic differences experienced by FGSs as they transition into and through HE because they may have engaged in ways of thinking and communicating which are not valued in HE.

The family plays an integral part in the accumulation of the linguistic capital necessary to engage in education (Lareau, 2000; 2011). Lareau (2011) explored how parenting styles across varying social classes affect language acquisition. Lareau's (2011) work suggested that middle class parents are more likely to engage in a dialogue rich interaction style, fostering greater linguistic and cognitive skills in their children compared to working class families. Rowe's (2008) research on Child Directed Speech (CDS)¹⁰ and socio-economic status (SES) offered an insight into the interactions between children and parents and the role these

¹⁰ Child-Directed Speech (CDS), also known as 'parentese', is characterized by a distinct speech pattern used by adults when communicating with young children. This speech style is notable for its higher pitch, slower tempo, exaggerated intonation, and simpler vocabulary compared to adult-directed speech. Rowe's study emphasizes that CDS is not just about the words used; it's about how they are delivered. The exaggerated, clear, and engaging nature of CDS is designed to capture the child's attention, making it easier for them to process and learn language. (Rowe, 2008)

interactions play in language development. Her findings suggest that parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to engage more frequently in CDS, and their use of a richer, more complex vocabulary when speaking to their children, significantly benefits the child's own language acquisition (Rowe, 2008). Rowe's (2008) research focused in on not just the vocabulary exposure but the responsiveness of the parent to the child's communication attempts. This responsiveness of interaction fosters an environment where children can practice their emerging language skills and begin to understand the nuances of language with the addition of context. Rowe's (2008) work suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing parental knowledge of child development and encouraging rich responsive language encounters could assist in the mitigation of the impacts of SES disparities on language acquisition.

Rodriguez-Sanchez (2023) builds on the work of Rowe (2008) and examined how children's language development is mediated by "parenting styles, parenting practices and parental investments" (p.53). She noted the often-underestimated role that the neighbourhood, school environments and the extended family have on language acquisition (Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023) and concludes that "Parenting explains around one-third of the total effect of SES on early language skills" (Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023, p. 53). Attig and Weinert (2020) examined the home learning environment (HLE) and its impact on the early language skills of children in their first two years. They concluded that SES was a significant predictor of language skills, with disparities in vocabulary and grammar linked to differences in HLE characteristics like parental interaction and joint parent-child activities. Employing data from 2,272 families the study emphasised the interactions between SES and HLE and suggests targeted support for families to enhance language outcomes for children.

Bernstein's (1960) work on language and social class cannot be ignored, even though it is based on crude stereotypes and is dated at this point. There is a linguistic difference between the social classes and this linguistic divide is something that HE institutions need to acknowledge and support their FGSs as they increase their 'domain specific linguistic capital' or as Berger and Luckmann (1966) would refer to as 'semantic fields' or 'zones of meaning'. Bernstein (1960) explains that between status groups in society there are linguistic differences other than their dialect, as distinguished by their forms of speech or different modes of speech "this difference is most marked where the gap between the socio-economic levels is very great" (p. 271). Bernstein (1960) further elaborates on this and makes specific reference to the lower working classes:

The latter are limited to a form of language use, which, although allowing for a vast range of possibilities, provides a speech form which discourages the speaker from

verbally elaborating subjective intent and progressively orients the user to descriptive, rather than abstract, concepts (p.271).

These observations by Bernstein (1960) importantly note that these differences in social class linguistic structures are independent of intelligence. Bernstein's (1960) finding could potentially explain why FGSs transition to HE and specifically the linguistic transition to academic language which can be difficult. The use of language based on social class was examined in Michaels et al. (2016) work, he asserts that:

In some communities, defining your terms, explaining your underlying assumptions or premises, and then summarizing your claims would be considered overly didactic or even impolite or arrogant, akin to "hitting someone over the head with your point." In other communities, this kind of formal explication, even in informal chat, is considered the hallmark of intelligent, persuasive commentary (p.10).

This variation in the use of language based on social class needs to be considered in light of FGS socialisation into HE, where a new academic language dominated. The home is the site where the initial language acquisition process began or as Bourdieu et al., (1994) alluded to above, the place where your 'apprenticeship in language' is served (p.21).

Language can serve to isolate and to demarcate one's status as a FGS. O'Reilly (2008) makes specific reference to this on the evolution of the university access programmes in Ireland. The inability of students to decipher the HE language due to their social class was noted and more specifically they perceived that middle class students arrived at university armed with the cultural and linguistic capital to succeed (O'Reilly, 2008; West et al., 2013). They observed that the language employed in HE made it difficult to cope with the transition to HE "Social exclusion and even the 'alien nature' of the language used in university created difficulties in coping" (O'Reilly, 2008, p. 31). In Lynch and O'Riordan's (1998) research, a student articulated the following: "the first two weeks of college there seemed to be loads of cliques. They spoke with different accents and used a different vocabulary than my own" (p.105). This can be a very isolating experience for students and make them question whether they 'fit in' (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013) or not or make them question why they did not acquire the necessary language in advance of their participation in HE.

Universal Design has its origins in architecture (Quirke, et al., 2024) here briefly UDL (Universal Design for Learning) and more specifically the CAST (Rose & Meyer, 2006) model of UDL and its specific relevance to language in HE will be examined. Quirke et al., (2024)

discussed the CAST model¹¹ and the three Pillars which they suggest are the cornerstones of inclusion. Of interest to this research is their discussion on the pillar 2 of CAST model and more specifically Building and developing expertise under the sub-heading of Language and symbols (Quirke et al., 2024, p. 54). Here they note the following about the challenge of the language specific to HE:

...in HE where each subject area and discipline has its own specific language and terminology (and perhaps symbols), and where we need to remember that what might be a normal part of conversation for us as experts in a discipline can be difficult for the novice (Quirke et al., 2024, p. 55).

They further explain that the challenge of HE language can be further compounded by difficulties with communication, and students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Quirke et al., 2024). They employ the CAST five checkpoints and suggest that HE institutions should “1. Clarify vocabulary and symbols; 2. Clarify syntax and structure; 3. Support decoding of text, mathematical notation and symbols; 4. Promote understanding across languages; 5. Illustrate through multiple media” (Quirke et al., 2024, p.55). Employing these guidelines could assist students in the socialisation process into HE and especially when the variation of student’s language capabilities entering HE is vast.

Ardoin (2017) in her research on the language which FGS encounter in college, identified a three stage process which college students can follow to add to their college knowledge. “1. Becoming aware, 2. Recognizing and defining terms and 3) Finding processes of seeking and understanding information” (p. 49). This three-step process assisted students who according to her research did not usually have the appropriate form of cultural capital or “college knowledge” to assist them in the college expectations (Ardoin, 2017). In summary the first stage highlights the need for students to become cognisant of the specific language and terms used in HE acknowledging that rural students face barriers in accessing HE knowledge. She noted that educators should introduce terms like ‘credit hours’ in advance of college participation to assist in their transition to College (Ardoin, 2017). The second step ‘recognising and defining terms’ emphasises the importance of students being able to identify and understand key terms related to college processes. This step is not just about knowing what ‘bursar’ and ‘provost’ is but understanding how these terms operate in their college

¹¹ CAST Model “Pillar 1 Multiple Means of Engagement: Enabling learners to engage positively with their learning and to appreciate the value of learning. Pillar 2 Multiple Means of Representation: focusing on offering choice in learning. Pillar 3 Multiple Means of Action/ Expression: considering assessment as part of the process so that learners have a choice in how they represent their learning.”. (Quirke et al., 2024, p.50)

experiences. The final step finding processes of seeking and understanding information, is about developing skills to actively seek out and understand college specific information. Knowing where to find resources and who to go to for help. Each step Ardoin (2017) notes builds on the previous step and should result in empowering FGS to navigate the complexities of HE more effectively.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Passeron and de Saint Martin (1965 as cited in Preece, 2015) academic language is “an elite code that has been socially constructed within the realms of academia and science for the purposes of furthering abstract and theoretical scholarly ideas” (p.261). Preece’s (2015) findings may apply to FGS also because being part of a linguistic minority community does have an impact on their ability to use academic language in HE. Preece calls on HE institutions “to attend to the inhabited identities of working class linguistic minority students in efforts to foster the development of their relationship to academic language” (2015 p. 260). One’s relationship to language and the value of language in particular, is of vital importance. This point is reinforced and made explicitly clear by Bourdieu et al., (1994):

The ability to manipulate academic language remains the principal factor in success at examinations. ...The linguistic setting of the family influences a broader range of behaviours than those captured by language tests. Performance on every test of intellectual skills which requires the decipherment of manipulation of complex linguistic structures depends on an apprenticeship in language which is unequally complex, according to family background. Moreover, what we inherit from our social origins is not only a language, but – inseparably – a relationship to language and specifically to the value of language (p. 21).

The strategy of code-switching as examined in the work of Elkins and Hanke (2018) in HE offers an insightful examination of the intersection of social class and language. Code-switching originated in the discipline of sociolinguistics and expanded the work of Bourdieu (Elkins & Hanke, 2018). It refers to the practice in the context of their research, of shifting between languages, mannerisms, tone, topics in order to align with the expectations associated with the context of HE. According to Elkins and Hanke (2018) “code-switching today entails shifting not simply between different languages or dialects but also different cultures” (p.40). It can even include how students move from the school setting to the home and the associated complexities of the move between “multiple cultural arenas” (Elkins & Hanke, 2018, p. 40). They explain that students employ this class related switching on campus in order to facilitate their navigation of the different social classes, of origin and of HE. An

important example from their research is from a student called Johnathon who engages in code-switching, his sister noted that he was ‘talking funny’ and home and ‘using big words’:

While at home, he allows himself to slip into his natural accent, using the vocabulary and grammatical structures familiar to his family and friends. As he returns to school, however, he again begins to shift his accent, sentence structures, and vocabulary to more closely fit those of his Midwestern college peers (Elkins & Hanke, 2018, p.41).

Elkins and Hanke (2018) provide evidence that students in HE are using this linguistic adaptation of code-switching, as a strategy for navigating the social class differences they experience. Their work highlights the complexities and challenges faced by students particularly those from lower social classes in adapting to the linguistic and the associated cultural norms in HE. The next section will focus on the geographic considerations of the transition to HE because it was a central consideration for the participants in this research, home and place mattered to them as family members.

3.3.2 The Geographic

You make a transition to HE irrespective of whether you are living at home (Brooks 2007; Christie 2007; Patiniotis & Holdsworth 2005; Mannay 2013; Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Ingram, 2011; Finn, 2014; Clayton et al., 2009; Ahn & Davis, 2023) or move away to attend HE (Holdsworth & Morgan, 2005; Holdsworth 2009). It seems that the ‘transition effect risks’ (Waller et al., 2011) are experienced by FG learners because:

Moving to a different learning environment brings new sets of risks, because the students must negotiate the meaning and significance of the everyday practices embodied in the new learning setting (Christie et al., 2008, p. 579).

These risks can be offset to a certain degree by the positive effect of living at home with the family when attending HE as a FGS. Living at home while attending HE can act as ‘a buffer’ to the unfamiliar space of HE for the FGS (Clayton et al., 2009). Finn (2014) and Reay et al., (2005) observe the gravitational pull towards a local institution (Mannay, 2013; Barker; 1972) to complete their HE degree and this can provide many benefits for FGSs as they remain close to their families. This point is also in line with the work of Cullinan et al., (2013) who asserts that while travel distance to the institution does not significantly impact overall HE enrolment, the results clearly indicate its significance for entry rates among lower social class leavers, especially those with weaker performance in the leaving certificate.

This point is further evidenced in the work of Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005) and supports the findings of Brooks (2007) for students from working-class backgrounds opting to stay in the parental home while attending University. This decision is not exclusively driven by economic reasons, but it frequently represents a tactic to mitigate the potential impact of HE on one's self-identity as the student navigates a new social class (Brooks, 2007). Christie (2007) reaffirms this point and notes that:

For students with limited financial means ... living at home may provide a reasonably secure and protected pathway to HE ... living at home can bring real benefits to non-traditional students. This is an important addition to normative debates about the student experience which often make too easy an association between disadvantage and spatial immobility (p. 2460).

Roman et al., (2008) examined the link between family support and increased self-esteem. Their research was carried out in Spain and their participants lived at home with their parents while engaging in HE. Their research reveals that parental support continues to have an impact on self-esteem post-secondary school and continues to be an important factor when the student goes on to university. A starting point from their findings should be to make parents aware of their continued impact on their children's education even when they are in HE and that "parents may pull back and not realize how important caring informational and instrumental support may be even at this stage in the learning process" (Roman et al., 2008, p. 135).

Ahn and Davis (2023) gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from 192 participants from three distinctly different HE institutions in Wales. They introduced 'locality' to research on understanding inequalities in HE and challenged the common assumptions about disadvantaged backgrounds. They interpreted locality as "an inclusive concept capturing place identity as well as local attachments based on language and culture" (p.19). They concluded that "by revealing the importance of local, cultural, geographical and environmental familiarity, which affects geographical mobility and social inequality in the HE context alongside social class" (p. 31) this forces both academics and institutions to broaden their understanding of the FGS experience. This is important because there is so much more to consider for institutions and researchers than just a student's social class alone.

Holdsworth (2009) contended that local students occupied a position "between the two worlds", that of being a local and a student. A conflict existed between the public world of the university and the private world of the family life. The students constantly moved between the two or crossing over the boundaries between the two fields of home and university (O'Shea, 2019). In contrast Abrahams and Ingram's (2013) research findings suggest that the

local student does not experience the 'two world' crisis because their student identity did not affect their home identity and therefore they were less likely to be between 'two worlds' as it was not an "all-encompassing experience" (p.2). Abrahams and Ingram (2013) suggested building on the work of Homi Bhabha's concept of "a third space" (Rutherford, 1990). Here the student "seamlessly switches between the two fields" and employs a chameleon habitus which assists them in the occupation of a third space (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013, p. 11). The third space was not part of the two fields of local and HE, it was a separate space altogether, outside of them residing 'in-between'. In their findings they discovered that the local students who lived at home were able to adapt to both fields and that they found themselves belonging in both, home and university (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013). The students in their study developed strategies to deal with their 'cleft habitus' from changing the way they spoke and how they dressed to fit in (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013). The notion of 'space will be examined further in the next section 3.3.3.

Mannay (2013) explored how working class students who lived at home and attended university "find themselves constantly having to move between two discursively different worlds" (p. 92). This point about moving between two worlds or fields has also been described by Ingram (2011) and she refers to it as a "habitus tug" when the habitus of individuals are tugged in two competing directions and the person feels torn between home and education (p.292). Mannay (2013) documents the importance of remaining a 'homebird' as being a perfectly acceptable within working class culture, to remain close to one's origins of class was very important. Bathmaker & Thomas (2009) frame the transition to HE as a 'double transition' to a new environment, one for which the students are unprepared. They experience several risks to their class and identity as they navigate the changes in relationships during this transition.

FGSs can experience the transition to HE as shocks to the system, both 'cultural shocks' (Gofen, 2009; Pascarella et al., 2004) and 'learning shocks' (Griffiths et al., 2005) or as Mallman and Lee (2016) refer to it as a 'transitional shock' (p.689). These shocks are felt by FGSs as they indicate that their experiences attending HE tests their ability to be able to withstand these shocks or new experiences of place and potential 'aftershocks' of the transition process. The word transition is a general term employed in the literature to discuss the initial period of socialisation into HE. The link here between the transition process and geography is because there is a change in the 'place' that the students inhabit and this causes changes in their experiences which can be interpreted as 'a shock' to their socialisation process. Potentially students are in a continual process of transition and re-socialisation into and out of HE.

Stahl et al., (2020) from out of their single case study concluded that a lack of support from family members had a critical role to play in the HE outcomes for a student called 'Robbie'. While their research focused on the initial transition to HE, they concluded that the "transition to University is clearly a longer period than just a week, and accessible, personalised support is needed beyond this time. This proposal was also supported by the work of Holton (2015). The two most salient factors missing in Robbie's journey were "close family involvement and peer mentoring, both of which would work to minimise some of the isolation Robbie experienced" (p. 11). The next section will examine the 'in-between' as previously alluded to in the introduction.

3.3.3 The In-Between

Space has been interpreted for too long as noted by Lefebvre (1974; 1991) as 'empty', when in fact 'space' is the place where interactions occur, the everyday happens. Lefebvre (1991) contends that "humans create the space in which they make their lives; it is a project shaped by interests of classes, experts, the grassroots, and other contending forces" (Molotch, 1993, p. 887). Grundmann (2019) captures the essence and links the 'in-between' to everyday reciprocity because it is "the space between the subjects that creates the human understanding of the world" (p.93). It is worth noting that the family and the space of the family home, acts as a 'filter' (Gouthro, 2005; Berger & Luckmann, 1966) to the HE transition. Space in this section will be discussed in a metaphorical way to examine the 'in-between' space between the individual and HE, questioning if the family in light of the literature discussed could occupy this space.

Fleming (2013) examines the 'in-between' as an epistemological position for PhD research, inspired by Heaney's (1987) in-between, when he describes his childhood home: "Two buckets were easier carried than one. I grew up in-between". Fleming (2013) draws attention to the importance of an acknowledgement of this space for researchers, which will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 10. The space in which one of the great sociological questions is played out between agency and structure, the place where they collide and interact, in-between. There are spaces in-between many of the dualities in society, the public and private spheres (Buckingham et al., 2008; Wainwright & Marandet 2010), the collective, subjective and the objective, the micro and the macro; the formal and informal. All of these dualities offer a 'space in between' to explore within their 'dialectical relationship' (Fleming, 2013). Fleming (2023) explains through drawing from the work of Negt (2008) that connections between the past and present experiences are dialectical and change occurs through dialectical interactions. The dialectic occurs in the in-between space of family and University, between

the past for FGS of no history of HE participation and the present experiences of HE for the first time as part of the family.

Employing Bourdieu's concept of *habitus clivè* or cleft habitus; one can see how this could assist the students navigate this confrontation between the two fields of university and home. It is also possible that the student could be catapulted and experience 'a hysteresis effect' if these two fields are incongruent (Bourdieu et al, 1999; Abrahams & Ingram 2013; Friedman 2016; Webb, 2019). Bourdieu (1999) defines *habitus clivè* as:

Such experiences tend to produce a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities (p. 511).

In Bourdieu's (1999) work on the '*Contradictions of Inheritance*' he used the concept of *Habitus clivè* and explained that it was a result of the process of inheritance and the accumulation of cultural capital by a child. When the accumulation of this capital occurs outside the family, in the education system it results in "tensions and contradictions" in the family relationships (p. 508). These tensions and contradictions lay in:

The drama and conflicts both internal and external and tied as much to upward as to downward mobility that are produced by the contradictions of succession, the most unexpected is no doubt the feeling of being torn that comes from experiencing success as a failure or better still as transgression (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 510) .

Bourdieu (1999) is speaking about a father and son in this instance but this could be applied to the position when students feel caught between two fields. Occupying the spaces in between two social classes or as Friedman (2016) explains this space as where "the upwardly mobile experience 'success as failure' as a betrayal of those who have nurtured and created them" (p.141; Zwerling & London, 1992). A comparison could also be made here to the work of Hoggart (1957) specifically when he explains the subjective journey of a scholarship boy:

He is at the friction point of two cultures; the test of his real education lies in his ability, by about the age of 25 to smile at his father with his whole face and to respect his flighty young sister and his slower brother (p. 292).

Hoggart (1957) points to the success of education lies in the scholarship boys' ability to remain in-between the two social classes keeping everyone happy, while knowing that he has become something that they are not, 'educated'. The experiences of working class students during the transition and post transition, in order for them to succeed in HE they must not be

like their family of origin and to succeed means inevitably being perceived as very different from their family of origin and rejecting the generational norms (Walkerdine et al., 2001).

Being torn between, means being torn between two, between two social class cultures; between two fields, between two identities as part of the first in family transition to education (Brooks, 2003; Mannay, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2005; Walkerdine et al 2001; Hoggart, 1957; Merrill, 2015; Fleming, et al., 2010; Inman & Mayes, 1999; Holdsworth, 2009). Some authors have referred to the University as a “transitional space” (Merrill 2015; Fleming, et al., 2010) where changes happen during the transition process and it implies ‘being in-between’ from an identity perspective during the process of assuming a new or modified identity, one which is “shaped by social, institutional and personal processes” (Merrill, 2015, p. 1869).

Holdsworth (2009) examines the experiences of scouse student identities in HE, they too are isolated “between two communities” or “between two worlds” (p.225). Hoggart (1957) as previously referred to captured rich data that builds a tapestry of a scholarship boy’s life, which provides an undeniable glimpse into his world. He explains the nature of the boys uprooting where he is living with a sense of “not belonging to any group” (Hoggart, 1957 p. 292; Inman & Mayes, 1999) occupying the space in between. It is evident in the work of Barbara Merrill (1999) and Linden West (1996) that many of the issues alluded to in Hoggart’s (1957) work are still relevant today and especially so in relation to people who gain knowledge resulting in feeling that they are ‘between two stools’. As Hoggart explains the scholarship boy engaging in education is “himself chafing against his environment...he is at the friction point of two cultures (1957, p. 292).

Sometimes in order for students to survive the experience of HE, they compartmentalize their university life and their ‘home life’ in an attempt to exist in both worlds. Wilcox et al., (2005) argues that students are conflicted and torn and must engage in a negotiation “between the old life they have left behind (family, home and friends) and the new life they have ahead of them. Strom and Savage (2014) also explain the role peers can play in the HE process they can influence “if friends are going to college, they may decide to attend as well” or the opposite may be true also (p.543). Strom and Savage (2014) suggested that the impact of similarity could be at play between peer groups. This is a complex process and ‘finding your place’, as one student expressed it, “between old and new creates tensions which have to be resolved” (Wilcox, et al, 2005, p. 712). A participant in the research carried out by Mannay (2013) alluded to this and the following quote captured the essence of this negotiation process:

Adele is a hybrid homebird who has begun to fly over the uncharted ground of academia, a journey which she hopes will not bring change, but one where she will inevitably be forced to negotiate her own belonging in two different worlds (p. 103).

This impacts on a student's identity, this friction and conflict mediates their HE experiences; some students cannot navigate this complex process of 'finding their place' in HE and get lost; the collective experiences of the family have the potential to provide a safety net. Many students occupy a 'double modality of belonging' as they move between the two spaces of learning and being; the family and the University. Educational experience cannot be reduced to formal primary, secondary and HE spaces because educational experiences begin "early in life within the family, domestic and otherwise mundane settings" (Lonie and Dicken, 2016, p. 88). Informal and learning itself is a continuous process, irrespective of boundaries and contexts (Moss & Petrie, 2002).

At this friction point when a person moves between two fields¹², the individual habitus experiences monumental change when the originally acquired habitus is out of line with the required habitus in a new field *hysteresis* effect comes into being (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Friedman, 2016). "As a result of the hysteresis effect . . . practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are objectively confronted is too distant from that in which they are objectively fitted" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977 as cited in Friedman, 2016, p.131) producing as discussed by Hoggart, (1957) and West (1996) a 'fragmented self'.

As FGSs in HE navigate various fields and social classes they can encounter difficulties 'fitting in' or 'standing out' or feeling othered in a new social landscape of HE which is unfamiliar to them (Reay et al., 2010; Forsyth & Furlong, 2003; Thomas & Quinn, 2007; Holdsworth 2009; Holton, 2015). In some cases Bowl (2003) notes that 'fitting in' sometimes comes at a cost and has the potential to affect students' wellbeing (p.122). As FGS search for places where "there are people like themselves" (Reay 2002, p. 413), Thomas and Quinn (2007) in their work on FGS found that 'fit', or more specifically, 'social fit' can lead to further challenges in the HE transition and can potentially lead students to feel invisible or experience a 'hysteresis effect' in an unfamiliar environment of HE. Although it is worth noting the point made by Holdsworth (2009) "it is not possible to discern a distinction in fitting in experiences among the students at the different HEIs" in her qualitative research, and she found that "contextual family and personal experiences tend to dominate students' experiences rather than the

¹²A field is considered by Bourdieu to be a "congruence of relations between Methodological practice of educational research positions objectively denied, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon the occupants, agents or institutions" (1992, p.72-73; Grenfell and James, 2004).

institutional practices” (p.230). Holdsworth (2009) found a distinction between the local student and the incoming (outsiders) students, noting that there is a clear difference in relation to who is better, the outsiders are perceived as better than the locals. This has an impact on the process by which those who are “not part of the traditional intake can feel ‘othered’ by both the institutions and students (Holdsworth, 2009, p. 234) this distinction is also supported by the work of Tett (2000).

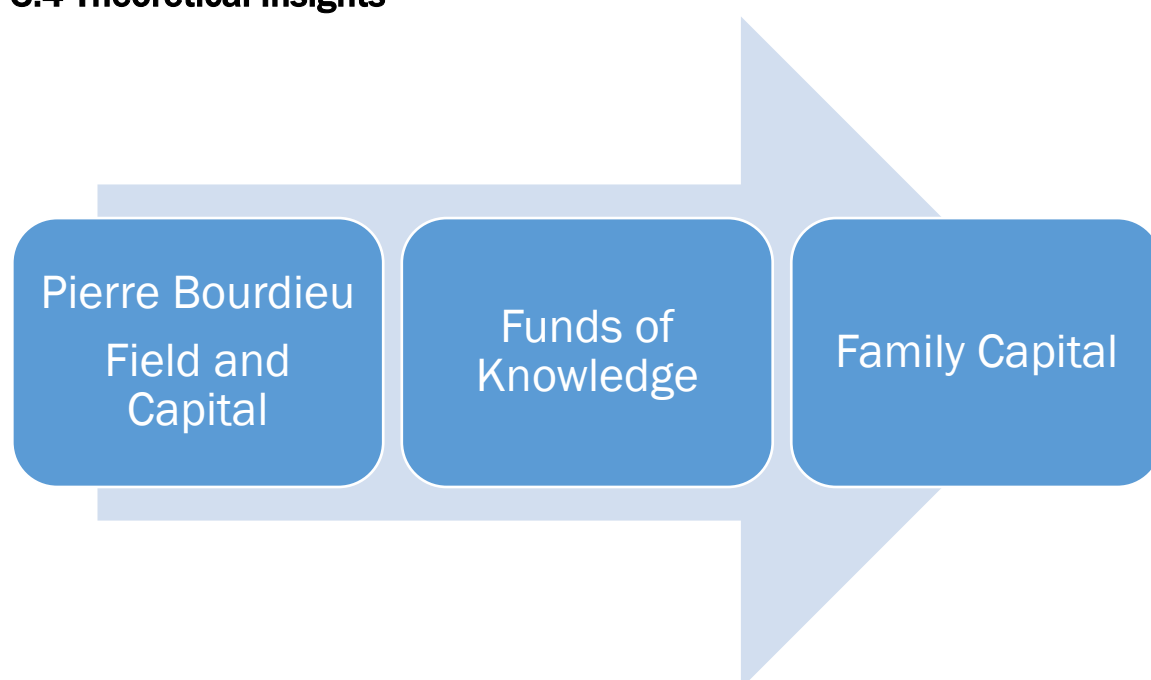
A participant in Friedman’s (2016) research was stuck ‘in-between’ “Helen says she had spent ‘many unhappy years trying to be accepted by the theatre elite’. Helen attributed much of this to the way that ‘embodied markers’ of her working-class background, her South London accent, her large, hooped earrings, and her choice of sports trainers – were judged by others in the industry.” (p. 139). Helen was a ‘Fish out of water’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979; Reay et al 2010), she was partially equipped to ‘play the game’ (Bathmaker et al., 2013, p. 723), she was not in receipt of a ‘natural feel for the game’, a ‘gift’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 109). Her lack of accrued dominant class practices and or capital (Bathmaker, et al., 2013), her need for constant ‘rational computation’ within the arts field, made her working class origins transparent and rendered her stuck ‘in between’. It is with ease that the dominant class navigate new experiences, while the working classes do not necessarily have that ‘gift’:

...one of the privileges of the dominant, who move in their world as fish in water, resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that best suit their interests. All they have to do is to follow their dispositions which being adjusted to their positions, ‘naturally’ generate practices adjusted to the situation (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 108).

There is a common assumption within the literature that FGSs arrive in the education system with a lack of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Reay, 1998; Webb et al., 2017). This alludes to the ‘deficit model’ of both familial (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2017) and individual deficits or that they are ‘replete of capitals’ (O’Shea, 2016) in advance of the HE experience (Moll, et al., 1992; Webb 2019; Reay, 1998) succeeding as Gofen (2007) explains irrespective of their family of origin. It is not a lack of cultural capital, it is perhaps a lack of dominant middle or upper class specific cultural capital, which may have an impact on this successful transition to HE. Employing Bourdieu as a theoretical perspective lends itself to a deficit model, as the students who do not have the required legitimate forms of capital prior to entry to HE are at a distinct disadvantage from the beginning. It may be that they simply do not have the college knowledge specifically, to assist in the navigation of HE. This discourse must be changed as “a first-generation entrant is by no means a blank slate or empty vessel” (Thomas & Quinn, 2007, p. 57). Share and Carroll (2013) make reference to the deterministic

nature of Bourdieu's work and they argue "it fails to capture other forms of capital" (Share & Carroll, 2013, p. 20). These other forms of capital could be all the knowledge and experience which FGS arrive in HE which is broad and varied and may not fit within the parameters of Bourdieu's classification of the various forms of capital. While the previous section has incorporated Bourdieu, the next section will examine his theory in more detail, with the addition of a theoretical discussion on the Funds of Knowledge and family capital theory.

3.4 Theoretical Insights



3.4.1 Introduction to theoretical insights

This research employs the theoretical lens of Berger and Luckmann (1966) which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. It was imperative at this point in the literature review to acknowledge and explore some of the dominant theoretical frames employed within the literature. They have framed our understanding of HE to date and have added significantly to our understanding of it. This section will focus on three theories pertinent to this research, the work of Pierre Bourdieu and specifically the application of his theoretical frame in HE research (Katartzi & Hayward 2019; Eyal, 2012; Gofen, 2009; Finn, 2017; Cooper, 2013; Brooks, et al., 2016, Bathmaker et al., 2013; Brooks, 2003; O'Shea, 2019, Han, 2019, Lahire, 2015; Grenfell, 2012; Reay, et al., 2001; Reay, 2000; 2004; Webb et al., 2017). Secondly the Funds of Knowledge will be introduced to examine households and their accumulated bodies of knowledge and how these could assist FGS in HE (Azaola, 2020; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama,

2017; Kiyama 2010; Moll et al., 1992; Kiyama & Rios –Aguilar, 2018). Lastly, family capital theory will be explored to examine the various ways the family can support its members as they pursue HE (Coleman, 1988; Gofen, 2009; Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013; Webber, 2017; Webb, 2019; Inman & Mayes, 1999).

3.4.2 The Bourdieu effect

Bourdieu's theory cannot be ignored, and it must be explored and examined as many researchers employ his work in order to illuminate their research on the HE experience. This research focused on the lived experiences of FGF and while Bourdieu dominates the field of education, the application and understanding of his theoretical frame is very important. Although if we continue to use Bourdieu as a theoretical lens and that continues to dominate the field, then we may begin to see replication in the interpretation of social phenomena and nothing new may emerge (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Collins and Stockton (2018) conclude that "an overreliance on theory (in general in research) could prevent the salience and importance of data from coming through" (p.9). Katartzi and Hayward (2019) propose that Bourdieu paid little attention to the relations within the HE field and that he did not examine the between field mechanics. West et al., (2013) have argued that maybe Bourdieu's view of capital is too limiting in that it does not provide an explanation for 'the fish out of water' who survives the HE experience. West et al., (2013) contend that there is a need in the work of Bourdieu to add a more "fine-grained, psychosocial analysis of how inner worlds may shape outer worlds" (p.123) and suggest that he is too sociological.

Atkinson (2021) is critical of Bourdieu and suggested that he only saw people as "beings in a field", as researchers it is imperative:

To look at specific individuals, and not just as they relate to one field but in their totality... We have to look at the multiple non-field contexts of socialisation they are and have been situated in: their family, their school..." (p. 199; Lahire, 2015).

Pierre Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' in HE research and HE transitions, have been employed by many authors and some have used his theory as an add-on lens or only utilize the 'habitus-field-capital, triad' (see for example Webb et al 2017, p. 147; Reay, 2001, 2000, 2004, 2010; Bathmaker, et al., 2013). Grenfell (2012) explained that Bourdieu's theory must not be applied to uncover certain social processes within the HE field alone, that to be true to the work of Bourdieu it is to incorporate the 'reflexive method' itself. He asserts that to use the

term 'thinking tools' is to be deductive, as Bourdieu's terms ¹³ such as habitus¹⁴, cultural capital¹⁵ and field¹⁶ are epistemological matrices existing at the generative root of the action of knowledge formation itself (Grenfell, 2012). Webb et al., (2017) concur with Grenfell (2012) and add to this discussion by identifying the relevance of seeking the interconnections between the concepts in a field. As they stress the role of intersubjective practices:

In thinking with Bourdieu, our argument so far has questioned the light touch and 'pick and mix' approach which also tends to focus on individuals as the unit of analysis through prioritising one or two of Bourdieu's concepts, such as habitus or capital, rather than exploring the interconnections and interdependencies between concepts in a field of intersubjective practices (Webb, et al., 2017, p.147).

In order to fully engage in a relational examination of the practices and experiences of the family members as they collectively engage in HE, as a researcher, it forced me to examine outside HE, into and within the family. HE is more than just an individual with a habitus engaging in it, bounded by the HE field, there is the collective to consider, the family. Brooks (2003) and Jenkins (1992) discuss Bourdieu's concept of habitus and emphasised the unreflexive nature of habitus in its ability to be able to withstand change and that only in times of extreme 'crisis' that the habitus may possibly transform; which may point to a lack of flexibility within Bourdieu's theory.

Much published research has framed HE as a 'field' (Reay et al., 2001; Katartzi & Hayward 2019; Gofen, 2009; Finn, 2017; Cooper, 2013; Brooks, et al., 2016, O'Shea, 2019). 'Cross field effects' (Han, 2019) between the family and HE must also be considered as they are the spaces where the individuals navigate and inhabit. 'Cross field effects' could potentially give an insight into how the subjective experiences of the transition between fields occur. As the fields remain static to a certain degree the individual moves between them (Loveday, 2015). It is also worth noting that there are also 'boundaries between the fields' (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Eyal 2012; O'Shea, 2019). Some of the boundaries FGSs face could be considered as the space to locate the barriers that need to be overcome, in order to successfully navigate the 'the crossing' to HE (O'Shea, 2019). Some students navigating the 'crossing' are parents who

¹³ Due to the spatial limitations of the thesis it is not possible to engage in a full rigorous examination of the detailed work of Pierre Bourdieu. This section will instead focus on the researchers who have employed his theoretical tools.

¹⁴ Habitus as defined by Bourdieu is "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences and actions, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" (1977, p, 82-83). It is like an orientation or set of guidelines that orientates actors, though a person is not necessarily aware of them. It is acquired through habitual repetition.

¹⁵ Cultural Capital "Bourdieu develops is that between economic capital (or "mercantile exchange") and symbolic capital, that includes sub-types such as cultural capital, linguistic capital, scientific and literary capital depending on the field in which they are located" (Grenfell, 2008, p.103). "...cultural capital is to all intents and purposes a synonym for "status" or habitus for "socialization"(p.102)

¹⁶ Discussed under Footnote 12 above.

are FG, some are students, also first generation and they continually experience class barriers to HE (McCoy & Byrne, 2011; Busher & James 2020; Brine & Waller 2004, Alsop et al., 2008; Lister, 2003; Eveland, 2020; Webb, 2019; Zart, 2019; Wainwright & Marandet 2010; Collier & Morgan 2008; O'Shea, 2015b, 2019; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1998; Share & Carroll, 2013) whether at the systemic level or the individual level, cultural or economic. O'Shea (2019) proposes that we should collectively move past the barrier metaphor, as this implies that it is impermeable and employ instead the metaphor of 'traversable boundaries' "particularly those from families where university attendance is not the norm" (p.2). The term 'traversable' denotes what one can do, rather than what one cannot while still acknowledging the presence of resistance.

Given the above it is therefore necessary to explore the 'boundary crossing' from the perspective of the participants of this research and to examine how the two fields they occupy of HE and family are engaged in a relational collective transition, in order to take account of the 'cross field effects'. Katartzi and Hayward (2019) use the metaphor of transitional frictions in order to ascertain the struggles experienced by students in their transition to HE. "The magnitude of this *transitional friction* can be seen as the conditional probability of completing the first year of HE; the higher the friction the lower that probability" (Katartzi & Hayward 2019, p. 6) of completion. These transitional frictions "arise as social agents try to cope with the academic demands of the new HE field" (Katartzi & Hayward 2019, p. 8). Katartzi and Hayward (2019) incorporated the Boudieusian concepts or 'thinking tools' to frame a view "of transitions from vocational education training to HE as a dynamic process that has at its core habitus negotiation and (trans)formation, alongside capital accumulation and mobilisation" (p.8). Katartzi and Hayward (2019) note that there is an inherent capacity within HE institutions to increase the academic capital of students, but is there a will? Their proposal of putting in place enabling pedagogies¹⁷ could ease the transitional frictions felt by students as they navigate the 'space between fields' and would ultimately result in an increased chance at HE completion (Eyal, 2012, p. 158).

Eyal (2012) identifies the 'space between fields' (p. 158) as the location where the transactions occur between fields in the 'zone of essential connections' (p.162) this highlights the importance of the liminal, the in between space as discussed above 3.2. O'Shea (2019) notes that the:

¹⁷ "Arguably, HEIs can play an equally important role in putting in place enabling pedagogies and knowledge-focused curricula, relevant as much as meaningful (Bernstein 2000), that facilitate the accumulation of academic capital and provide access to powerful knowledge" (Katartzi & Hayward, 2019, p. 13)

‘space between fields’ also offered opportunities for learning... this included recognising previous life experiences not in terms of deficit or lack but as a form of ‘experiential capital’ that could assist in negotiating the various boundaries between fields”(p. 12)(Also discussed by O’Shea, 2016; West et al., 2013).

Finn (2017) examines the ways in which capitals can move between fields and can have an impact on student mobility capital “the extra money she earned from her agency work and the social networks she accessed there, but also in the accumulation of emotional capital ‘on the move’ between fields that boosted her self-esteem and emotional wellbeing” (p. 753). This highlights the potential flow of capital between fields and which therefore opens up the possibility of liquid education effects. The next section on Funds of knowledge explores the theory and various associated literature presenting another theoretical perspective which may provide a way for exploring the knowledge held in families.

3.4.3 Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge (Azaola 2020; Rios -Aguilar & Kiyama, 2017; Kiyama 2010; Moll et al, 1992; Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018) refers to “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). In essence Funds of Knowledge as a theoretical approach emphasises the idea that these ‘bodies of knowledge’ and experience should be leveraged by educators to enhance learning in education. The theory seeks to counter the deficit-based approach and focus on what students bring to the learning environment. Funds of knowledge read in conjunction with the Boudieusian theoretical framework “can complement each other when attempting to understand educational opportunity for underrepresented students” (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011, p. 163). Kiyama (2010) reaffirms this and contends that:

Funds of knowledge and cultural capital share a common perspective in how educational knowledge and culture are valued. Both frameworks assert that certain individuals and their knowledge are not valued, because they do not belong to the dominant culture (p. 336).

Bourdieu’s analysis of the French HE system, deduced that the reason working class students were not succeeding to the same degree as middle class students was not due to intelligence but because of the curriculum. The curriculum was focused on the ‘things’ that middle class students were already very familiar with. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

The education system therefore designates those endowed with cultural capital, which is generally inherited as a result of social origin as 'academically talented' (Naidoo, 2004, p.459).

Traditionally funds of knowledge was applied in research with children, families and the school system (Moll et al., 1992). Funds of knowledge approach can be "very useful in understanding the development of families' educational ideologies and aspirations" (Kiyama, 2010, p. 332) and in the development of both "helpful and limiting educational ideologies" (Kiyama, 2010, p. 330). Moll et al., (1992) incorporated in their research methodology, a combination of:

Ethnographic observations open ended interviewing strategies, life histories and case studies that when combined analytically can portray accurately the complex functions of households within their socio-historical contexts (p. 132).

This is an important point in light of this research because this research aimed to locate and capture the experiences of families and education as a collective endeavour. This research moves the context from solely within the HE space in order to examine the effects of HE felt within the household. More recently, funds of knowledge has been examined in the HE context and applied to the college aspirations of FGF (Kiyama, 2010; Kiyama & Rios –Aguilar, 2018). One idea associated with funds of knowledge is the acknowledgement that education occurs everywhere it is an everyday activity, and it is certainly "not limited to schools that is why we emphasize the study of households" (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018, p. ix).

The reason to focus on households is to analyse the cultural practices of the families and the "history of the families which reveals the accumulated bodies of knowledge of the households" (Moll et al, 1992, p. 133). These accumulated bodies of knowledge are held within the family household, they could be unveiled and potentially capitalized upon by HE institutions. Funds of knowledge moves the conversation away from the first generation families' deficit (Azaola, 2020) to a conversation which recognises that the contexts of learning must take into account the 'multiple spheres of activity' that individuals have accumulated their knowledge because this accumulation occurs at a micro everyday familial level. Gofen (2009) and Webber (2017) employ the term 'family capital' in order to explain how the family assists in the navigation of FGF members into HE; the family has something which can support the student in their transition in and through HE, they may be equipped with 'Familial Capital'.

3.4.4 Family Capital theory and Familial Support

In order to discuss family capital it is important to begin with a discussion on social capital. Coleman (1988) situated social capital and its effect “within the family and in the community outside the family” (p.95). In his research on social capital in the family, Coleman (1988) notes that family background can be separated into three types of capital, financial (families wealth or income), human (parental education) and social (relations between the children and parents) (1988, p. 110). Coleman (1988) noted in his application of social capital to the family, the dependency of human capital on social capital within the family:

if the human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child's educational growth that the parent has a great deal, or a small amount, of human capital (p.110).

Gofen's (2009) work on family capital and FGS was informed by the family resilience approach:

... a family has the ability to withstand and rebound from adversity...family capital approach stresses how a family can be used and channel its non-material resources such as priorities, time and behavior for the accomplishments ... (p.106).

Influenced by the work of Coleman (1988), Gofen (2009) claims that “family social capital is related to what is known as bonding social capital, which gives a sense of identity and common purpose” (p.107). While Gofen (2009) was influenced by the theory of social capital, family capital is not solely based on interpersonal relationships.

Family capital attempts to capture all aspects of investment made by the family for the benefit of the children's future. Hence, family capital is constructed from aspects of social capital, aspects of cultural capital, and additional features of a family's day-to-day life (Gofen, 2009, p.107) family capital also included “...parental aspirations, values and attitudes to education” (Gofen 2009, p. 116; Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013).

Webber (2017) offered insights into the support given by family members to mature female students and explains how this support is analysed through a family capital frame. When Webber (2017) used the word capital she was defining the types of capital on offer within families (family capital); “the reasons why partners give practical and emotional support and the impact of family capital on a woman's success in HE studies” (p. 410). The family provided a ‘store of capital’ and offered a strong ‘foundation of support’ and if families invested capital in women in HE they coped much better with the demands of HE (Webber, 2017, p. 413). The findings of Webber (2017) are summarized in the following Fig 3.4 noting the addition of

‘emotional capital’ and a temporal dimension to the research as she demonstrated “that the family is a valid source of different forms of capital” (p.414).

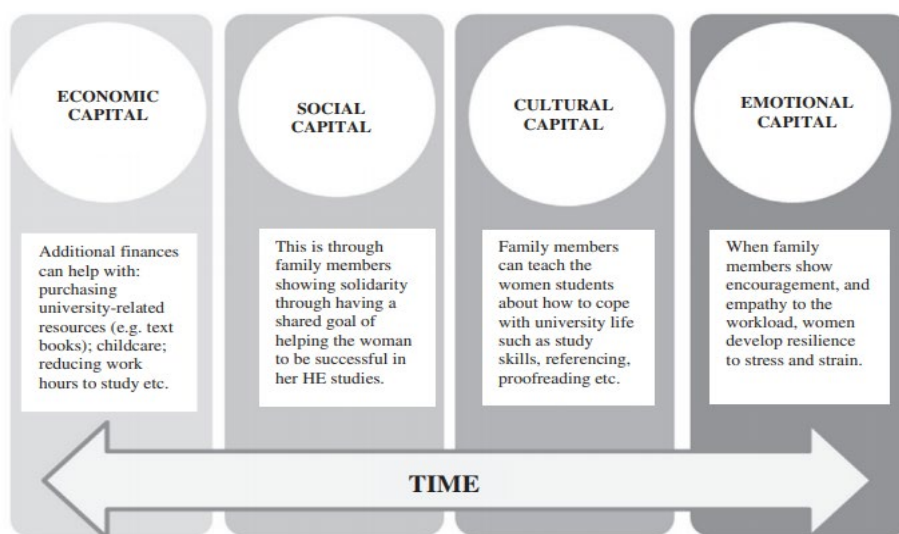


Fig 3. 4 Model of Family Capital (Webber, 2017, p. 415)

The emotional capital discussed above by Webber (2017) has its origins in the work of Zembylas, (2007) and Burke and Jackson (2007). Burke and Jackson (2007) stressed that emotional reserves are created and built up in the family and serve to sustain relationships within the family because the emotional capital was provided by the women and consumed by the other family members.

Webb (2019) (similar name, different author) incorporated the work of Bourdieu (1990) and family capital theory of Gofen (2009) to explain the critical role which the family played in mediating the perceived lack of knowledge of working-class students in HE. The family provided a sense of wellbeing as they “may not have access to the same academic capital as other peers, making their experience of these educational fields more stressful, but family capital enables crises or hysteresis to be managed” (Webb, 2019, p. 541). The family played a vital role in the lives of FGSS in their transition to HE especially when they are surrounded by people who they deem to have more legitimate forms of capital to succeed in HE. The students in Webb’s (2019) study had a “transformational habitus or at least a creative approach to dealing with perceived lack of capital” mostly they must be resilient and they carried with them their families’ expectations of HE completion. This was reinforced continually through interactions and relationships within the family as they aimed to break the “reproduction of inequality present in their family histories” (p.543). The work of Webb (2019) explained that the students were able to activate the capital which was located in the social relations of family members in order to successfully facilitate “a habitus orientated towards successfully playing the University” (p. 542). The students’ ability in Webb’s (2019) study pointed to their

capacity to break the cycle of inequality in their families and the research also alluded to the resilience of the FGS to persist even when the expectation of them was to fail because the family acted as a buffer (Strom and Savage 2014) and as a source of encouragement (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010).

Fleming et al., (2010) note that “by far the most valued resource for non-traditional students was the support they received from their families” (p. 10). This was also reinforced by Fleming and Finnegan’s (2011) work on non-traditional students. They stressed the importance of the familial role and the support it provides for HE “as a collective investment in the family’s cultural capital” (p.6). They were in fact, by the giving of emotional and financial support, investing in the future of the family as a whole, adding to the family’s ‘stock of knowledge’ (Fleming & Finnegan, 2011; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In the transition to HE families can play a vital role in this process, Vryonides and Lamprianou, (2013) in their research explain that the resources families have was influenced by their social class and stress how families play an integral role in an individual’s life prospects, notably around the “transition point is when young people and their families need to make decisions regarding future destinations when leaving secondary school” (p.81). Lamprianou et al., (2019) proposed that family support which was consistent had a positive impact on adjustment to HE but equally if families were over involved this could have a “negative impact on the students wellbeing” (p.352). Conversely it must also be noted that families have the power and capacity depending on the family history of education, relationship to the person in HE and social class of the family, to dissuade and to even encourage students not to attend HE (Gofen, 2009; Terenzini et al., 1996; Inman & Mayes, 1999; Edwards, 1993). According to Terenzini et al., (1996) FGS are more likely to come from lower socio-economic class and reported receiving very little help or support from their parents to attend HE. The portrait that Terenzini et al., (1996) paints in their research was that FGS are at academic risk due in part due to lack of family support. Terenzini et al., (1996) and Inman and Mayes (1999) carried out large scale quantitative research on FGS, both pieces of research confirm that FGS received less support from family members. To further expand on this Inman and Mayes (1999) suggested that in order to succeed in HE, FGS have to choose between their family and HE as both familial culture and University culture clash, and to succeed means they must reject their parent’s way of life, which in turn would mean cutting off their perceived familial support network, if it in fact it was there in the first place.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed three interconnected areas of literature: first-generation students, their transition into higher education, and the theoretical perspectives that help to frame these experiences. It traced the evolving terminology attached to FGS and outlined the barriers commonly highlighted in the research, before turning to the transition literature, which foregrounds linguistic, geographic and liminal dimensions. This chapter points to the significance of the “in-between” space that many students occupy, shaped as much by institutional cultures as by the expectations and histories of their families. The chapter concluded by examining theoretical insights from Bourdieu, funds of knowledge and family capital, which together offer a broader lens through which to consider how families support, interpret and sometimes reshape HE participation.

Across these strands, one fundamental question emerges: do current frameworks fully capture the dynamic and relational nature of family life during HE participation, or do they risk presenting students and families in overly fixed and narrow ways? This question underpins the rationale for the present study, which seeks to move beyond individualised accounts and attend more closely to the shifting interactions, identities and practices within families themselves. It also provides the bridge to Chapter 4, which examines the family and HE in greater depth, exploring the themes of relationships, identity, roles and collective transformations.

CHAPTER 4 LITERATURE REVIEW: PART 2-THE FAMILY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines three thematic areas, 1) relationships and the HE experience, 2) Identity and the connected roles, and 3) collective transformations. This chapter is a continuation of the discussion in Chapter 3 and it must be noted that while discussing roles and relationships, they are in essence, both intertwined and one influences the other.

4.2 Relationships and Higher education

This section of the literature review examines the impact of HE on relationships and focuses specifically on parental relationships, sibling relationships and the extended family.

4.2.1 Parental Relationships and Higher Education

The HE experience for families can place stresses on relationships and for some parents their relationships survive for others they do not. Feeney and Lemay (2012) examine the theory of emotional capital which was in line with Webber's (2017) findings in the way "relationships are able to withstand threats when partners have built emotional capital within the relationship, by contributing to positive shared experiences" (Feeney & Lemay 2012, p. 1004). To expand on this further every relationship was considered to have an "emotional bank account" and was comprised of conversations responding to your partner's needs and these together make partners feel special and build up the store in the "emotional capital bank account" (Feeney & Lemay, 2012, p. 1004). Gottman et al., (2002) explain the increase of emotional capital was dependent upon whether couples "turn towards each other rather than away in everyday mundane interactions" (p. 384). The balance it seems could be tipped in either direction and the impact on the relationship of the HE experience forces couples to look into their 'emotional bank account' to see if they have enough to get them through the HE experience (Gottman, 1999; Feeney & Lemay, 2012). This was in concert with the work of Kerns and Turk (1984) who suggested that if there was satisfaction within the marriage prior to the HE experience then this would equate to support for educational pursuits of the other partner in HE. Family relationships are in a constant state of building, they are emergent constructions in which past interactions, events, behaviour and knowledge shape the current expectations (Finch & Mason, 1993). Norton et al., (1998) posited that partners need to be

involved in HE to make them feel part of the process; only then will the 'separate worlds trap' be avoided. They assert that while partners act as 'a buffer' to the stresses of HE study, the experience can have a negative effect on their relationship. The solution as alluded to above was to make partners part of the process because "the aim is to make-- not break" (Norton et al., 1998, p. 88).

The impact of role changes on relationships was demonstrated in the work of Maynard and Pearsall (1994). They included both male and female mature students in their research. Their findings illustrated the gender dimension of mature student experiences because they observed that men received more support than the women during HE participation. The males and females experienced stress but it was experienced differently and dependent on their gender. Females experienced stress, as a direct consequence of their role and demands on them as a mother in the family.

It was evident from the work of Webber (2015; 2017) that when mature women engage in HE the transformational effects are felt by women and their families as they reconstruct their identities and their family relationships. Two main themes emerged from Webber's (2015) research, that of identity and behavioural change and the effects these transformations had on their husbands' parenting practices (p. 216). This points to the knock-on effects of identity change on the relationship and role changes within the family. During the process of HE the women changed their perceptions of motherhood and their self-constructions, they saw themselves in a new light. This finding by Webber (2015) aligns with the findings of Edwards (1993) and Merrill (1999): the women's self-confidence increased as they gained more knowledge as many women noted that they "see things differently now" (Webber, 2015, p. 217). Webber (2015) identified three areas of change which occurred between the women and their husbands:

The women's identity change had an impact on the husband, secondly, this resulted in changes in their relationship, which, thirdly, caused a change in position in the relationship (p.218)

The husbands in Webber's (2015) study noticed these changes, and their wives' ability to be able to see things from more than one perspective, they had become more analytical. This had a direct impact on the positions the females occupied within the family and sometimes these new positions were in flux, and conflict emerged within the relationship. Brine and Waller (2004) contend that conflict can emerge because of the perceived risk associated with identity change and that members of the family and friends may feel intimidated or threatened by the change in the mature student's identity. Many husbands in Webber's

(2015) study began to see their wives in a new light as some took on more of the household responsibilities to enable the women to successfully complete their studies. HE for many of the women in Webber's (2015) study had a profound impact on their parenting abilities. This had a direct impact on both the father's parenting practices and their relationships with their children. This was in part due to the increased amount of time fathers spent with their children. She found that if their husbands were supportive in their wives educational pursuits, they were more inclined to change their parenting practices based on the women's experiences and knowledge. This was in contrast to the findings of Edward's (1993) research who found that relationships deteriorated due to the HE experience. Many of the women's marital relationships in Webber's (2015) research were improved by the experience of HE "as mutual respect grew stronger" (p. 223). Webber's (2015) research concluded that "education can cause profound change to a woman's identity but effects on the family cannot be ignored, thus showing that identity change and transformation is not an insular process but can be experienced by others within the family home" (p. 224). This was a key point to note and it challenges the commonly held view that transformation happens only at an individual level (Mezirow, 1978; 1981).

The transformational effects of HE on husbands was summarized below Fig 4.1. It documents the flow and process of change that husbands sometimes engage in, how it may have an impact on their behaviour as a parent because new meaning schemes of parenting could develop and which can lead to repositioning of husbands within the family.

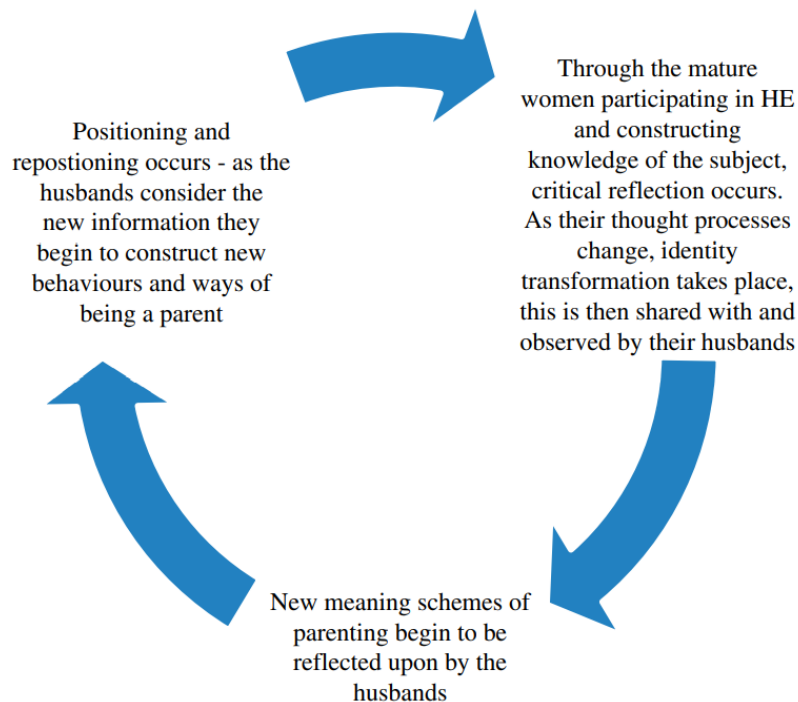


Fig 4. 1 Cycle of Transformation for husbands (Webber, 2015, p. 224)

Finn (2014), through an in-depth analysis of qualitative longitudinal interviews (n=24 age 17-19yrs) with young female undergraduates, drew out the relational and emotional aspects of family relationships in their transition to HE. The respondents in Finn's 2014 study said "they were deeply aware of the ways in which they created and contributed to the emotional dimensions of home and the role they played within their own families" (p. 36).

They saw themselves as being active in the social and emotional quality of their family life and were not passive individual bystanders in need of "care and support" (Finn 2014, p. 47). Finn (2014) makes a crucial point that the everyday nature of family relationships ran in parallel with their experiences of HE. Through the HE process new relationships with family members emerge as students gain more personal autonomy and this had an impact on the relationships within the family (Finn, 2014). One respondent referred to this as "the push and pull of home and family and the competing relations of towardness and awayness with regard to HE" (Finn 2014, p. 44) and it gives rise to "new alliances between kin" (Finn, 2014, p. 47).

The impact of HE participation by mature women (i.e. as a parent-student) on family members and relationships (Webber, 2015) or children-students in the family (Finn 2014) had the capacity to throw some family relationships into chaos. HE as experienced by family members can give rise to differences between those family members who are attending HE and those who are not "necessitating the problematic everyday engagement of being in the same place but in a very different space" (Mannay, 2013, p. 106; Archer & Leathwood, 2003).

It was evident in the work of Branje, (2018) and Laursen and Collins, (1994) that as a result of HE participation in the family, the relationship between parents and their children moved to a more egalitarian situation and it was less top down, but this transition can cause conflict (Branje, 2018).

4.2.2 Parents in higher education and their children

The opportunity for parents to act as a role model for their children was an important factor to consider in relation to HE entering the home (Zart, 2019; Edwards 1993; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010; Andrade, 2013). Parents who engage in education can be seen as role models for their children (Gouthro, 2005); as stated by one participant in Andrade's (2013) research "My mother is the shining example in my life. She worked hard to put herself through school and she fostered a sense of wonder in learning for me at a very young age" (p. 13). The impact of parents in HE on their children cannot be underestimated. The Growing up in Ireland Longitudinal study reaffirmed this and demonstrated that it was the educational status of parents, and more specifically the mother, that has the greatest impact on a child's future educational trajectory (Department of Health and Children, 2009).

When parents attended, HE, their knowledge acquisition and experience had a direct impact on their children's education (Edwards 1993, Webber 2015, Wainwright & Marandet 2010; Share & Carroll 2013). Merrill (1999) noted that children's independence grew as part of experiencing their parent in HE. When parents attend, HE they transmit to their children how to survive within it (Share & Carroll, 2013).

The participation of parents in HE can foster intergenerational social mobility because of raised parental aspiration and the transmission of educational experiences to inspire them to follow suit (Share & Carroll, 2013). In 2009 the Growing up in Ireland published their National Longitudinal Study of Children the lives of the 9 year old child cohort. It was observed in the findings that as maternal educational levels increased so did the expectations of the mother that her child would progress to HE. Of mothers who had completed lower secondary school only 55% of them expected that their child would attain a degree/postgraduate level. This figure jumps to 93% for mothers who had attained a graduate education. See Fig 4.2 below

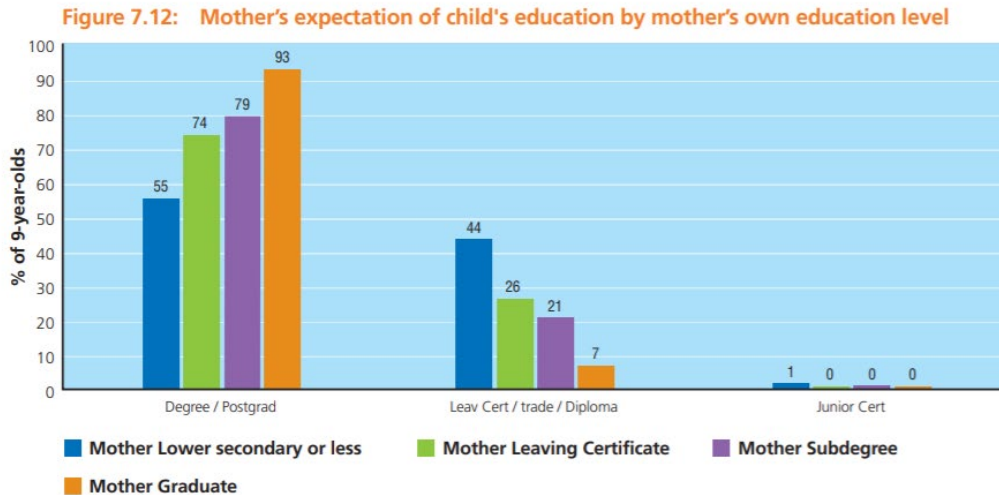


Fig 4. 2 Mothers expectation of child's education by mothers own education level (GUI 2009)

A second finding from the Growing up in Ireland research (2009) which was relevant to this research was the link between maternal education and number of books in the home. These results show that the higher the maternal education the greater the number of books found in the home. “A total of 76% of children whose mothers were Third Level graduates had more than 30 children’s books in their home compared to 41% of nine-year olds whose mothers had Lower Secondary education or less” (p.99) (Fig 4.3).

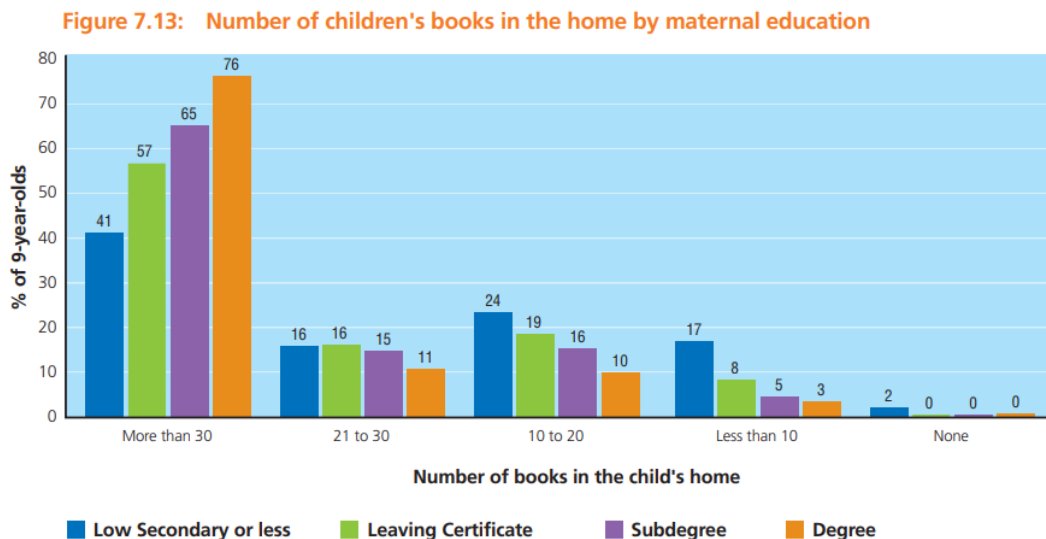


Fig 4. 3 Books in the home by Mother's education (GUI, 2009)

Wainwright and Marandet (2010) carried out research on students with caring responsibilities and the impact this had on their families. Their research consisted of an in-depth literature and policy review, eighteen in-depth interviews with staff and a questionnaire, which 71 student parents completed (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010, p. 454).

The home environment changed when a parent engaged in HE: “through me studying, he’s advanced in his reading skills because I normally scatter the books all around so he’ll pick up one” (Student, female). Indeed, as this quote suggests, bringing study materials home “can transform the very tactile fabric of the home” (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010, p. 461). The children of parents engaged in HE become interested in their educational pursuits as they ask questions and spark curiosity in the education of their parents and begin to learn about the content of their course material (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010). This also had a direct impact on the home environment and new norms around learning are set, the environment becomes more conducive to studying, the tone towards education was set (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010, p. 460) it starts to become the norm within the household.

O’Shea (2016) noted the impact of HE on the family as HE moves into the family, they “are the hidden or invisible outcomes from university attendance: conversations within the household and the passing of knowledge between family members” (p.75). A participant in Koh et al.’s (2017) research noted this impact: “She was able to help me through college because she got her degree” (p.621). Koh et al.’s. (2017) study specifically focused on single parent families where the parent engaged in HE, this experience had a direct impact on the relationship between the parent and child. The changes in the relationships included “increased closeness, enhanced respect, and subsequently a greater sense of pride toward their parents” (Koh et al., 2017, p. 623).

Koh et al. (2017) concluded that more supports should be provided for FG single parents which would translate to “a positive generational impact, contributing to children’s successful educational attainment” (p. 629).

Brooks (2015) found that students with dependent children were much more likely to experience guilt if they were female; student- fathers very rarely experienced guilt. These results had a cultural and geographical dimension as females in the UK were more likely to experience guilt compared to those in Denmark. In Denmark being away from children during the day was widely accepted as the norm for females; this was not the case in the UK. Brooks (2015) concludes that guilt felt by mothers was a social construction. Guilt was an individual emotion but it was heavily influenced by the culture which the female occupies. Whether a woman feels guilty or not was influenced by cultural norms and she asserts that “intensive mothering is culturally dominant in the UK while in contrast, parent-worker model prevails in Scandinavia” (p. 517). A mature student who participated in Luttrell’s (1997) research interpreted their return to education as a quest for ‘visibility’. For a mother to return to education was perceived as a shift from her dominant role and the woman was seen as selfish and her decision as wrong. Her decision was interpreted as a deviation from her primary

gendered responsibilities and forced the mother to question her motivations for success in education (Luttrell, 1997).

Webber's (2015 and 2017) research on the intergenerational benefits of HE for family members added to the work of Bryan and Simmons (2009) a participant recounted that "for a first generation college student parents have absolutely no idea what it's like" (p. 391). If parents do engage in HE, then they do have an idea and this could potentially bridge this identified no idea gap. The shared experience could give rise to a shared understanding because of their joint participation.

It was important to note that the educational transfer of HE from parents to children was not a one way process. Thomas and Quinn (2007) focused on the reciprocal aspects of familial relationships and that these cannot be ignored in discussions around the family and HE. Within the family children are also active participants and generators of social capital¹⁸.

This reciprocity of capital between females and their older children has been further explored by Webber (2017) and focused on cultural capital:

Women also benefitted from cultural capital from their older children who were also going through a university experience... Offering cultural capital in this way was also seen as endorsement that their studies were respected and valued by their partner and children (p. 416).

This point was also noted in the work of Kiyama and Harper (2015) because having their offspring reach a certain educational status could prompt parents to reach higher in relation to their own education. Webber (2017) demonstrated in her research that the women in HE who had children in HE at the same time as them "benefited from cultural capital from their older children who were also going through a university experience" (p. 416).

In the conclusion of Wainwright and Marandet's 2010 research they noted that:

A much needed next step is an engagement with children of parents in learning. Only then can we get a more comprehensive sense of aspirations and potential for social mobility through inter-generational learning. (p. 463; also supported in the work of Thomas & Quinn, 2007)

¹⁸ Social Capital for the purposes of this research will be understood as the combined "the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

The above authors, albeit slightly different, argue, that in order to gain an insight into the effects parental participation in HE on children, we must engage in research with the children through listening to them and hearing their voices.

4.2.3 Sibling relationships and Higher Education

Davies (2015) examined siblings and their intra-generational ties to each other from the perspective of the role they play in the development of identity and self. She asserted that while the sibling relationship was the relationship that will exist the longest in one's life, it had the potential to exert tremendous influence on the identity formation of a young person. Identity was often constructed "in relation to how they are similar to or different from their siblings" (p. 679). Davies (2015) concluded that we must understand the role of siblings as part of a 'web of relationships' which have a temporal and spatial dimension and these relationships play an integral part in the development of the self and identity (p. 693). Therefore, siblings and their effects can have far reaching influence on HE if harnessed to their full capacity. Siblings are a powerful force in relation to HE 'spillover' or multiplier effects (Altmejd et al., 2020; Grgic & Bayer, 2015) and the chain enrolment effects of siblings (Kaczynski, 2011) of HE choice (Davies, 2015) and participation.

While the work of Altmejd et al. (2020) primarily focused on the economic aspects of HE and specifically HE choice, it was worth noting from the findings of their study that "an older sibling's enrolment in a better college increased a younger sibling's probability of enrolling in college at all, especially for families with low predicted probabilities of enrolment" (Altmejd et al., 2020, p. 1). They also note that "the choices and outcomes of older siblings could influence their younger siblings' choices by providing information unlikely to be transmitted through other means" (Altmejd et al., 2020, p. 4).

This body of work suggests students react powerfully to information from people close to them or sources that otherwise are highly personalized... Siblings, and social networks more generally, may represent an important channel through which information frictions can be overcome (Altmejd et al., 2020, p. 6).

Their work accurately identifies that it would be worth investigating the role played by 'other socially close individuals' in HE and that this may shed 'light on the origins of inequalities in post-secondary outcomes' (Altmejd et al., 2020, p. 34). The work of Altmejd et al. (2020) was from an economic centric standpoint it was a quantitative piece of research and it focuses on university choice as opposed to family HE experience. Their research did not identify the

information which was transmitted between siblings at a micro level of interaction, to determine the impact on university choice. They do however accurately identify the gravity of the spillover (Altmejd et al., 2020) effects of HE between siblings.

Finn (2014) focused on the sibling relationships from a relational perspective and explains that through the process of HE participation new relationships can emerge between family members which includes siblings. One of the participants in Finn (2014) study revealed “the impact of siblings’ practices and orientations towards university on other family members” (p.43) within the family home. Finn (2017) deduced that by focusing on the relational in families it may serve to illuminate “not just the downward transmission of class-based resources it becomes possible to understand how siblings within the same kin network might make different choices about university related mobility” (p.755) which can be heavily influenced by sibling experiences of HE.

4.2.4 Extended family support and relationships

Research has demonstrated that there was often an unclear separation between support from parents and that from extended family (EF) members in HE pursuits (Juang et al., 2016; Morosanu, et al., 2010; Lee & Padilla, 2016). A metasynthesis of qualitative studies on family and community in HE carried out by Mwangi, (2015) supported the view that definitions of family involvement in HE are still limited and they are in part due to how the family itself was defined. In future, research using terms such as family network, relatives and close others should include a wider range of EF members in their samples rather than solely nuclear family members (Mwangi, 2015).

Positive effects of the EF on traditional students learning and their ability to translate social and family capital into educational attainment has been examined in the literature by Roman, et al. (2008), Gofen (2009) and Nelson (2016). HE participation or the introduction of free education could in fact have led to a disconnect between generations, in that some older members of a family may feel left behind educationally. Helping with childcare could prove to be a bridge to reconnection as older generations could benefit from being relied upon for assistance (Brannen, 2006).

The role played by the extended family varies and was dependent upon whether the student was a mature student with caring responsibilities or a child student who was FG with little caring responsibilities. Webber (2017) identifies family support as originating from either nuclear or extended in its origins. This was important in an Irish context because of the role

grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren (McNally et al., 2014). This was even more important in the context of care of children from lower socio-economic classes in that “less well-off parents are using grandparent childcare more than any other type of childcare” (Mc Nally et al., 2014, p. 182). Mc Nally et al. (2014) employed data from the Growing up in Ireland longitudinal study to examine the child care provided by grandparents in Ireland. Their results indicated clearly that “grandparent care is mostly used by parents who are more financially constrained” and “education was also an important factor, with primary caregivers with the lowest education, significantly more likely than those with the highest education to use grandparent childcare” (p. 190). FGS in University who are parents with dependent children be they lone parents, married or have partners are using grandparents and they play a significant role in the lives of their grandchildren. McNally et al. (2014) discussed the key role grandparents are playing in the lives of their grandchildren and that this was not being recognised or provided for at policy level. The amount of care grandparents are able to provide “may have knock on constraints for parent’s participation in the labour force” (McNally et al., 2014, p. 182) and potentially in HE. In relation to extended family support, Nelson (2016) integrates the conversation about extended family support and applies it to the work of Bourdieu (1991). Nelson (2016) concluded that educational attainment was affected by the student’s ability to utilize their accumulated social capital in the form of extended family support.

Andrade (2013) carried out research with 18 American Indian Graduate Women and concluded that the role of the immediate and extended family was of critical importance in their aspirations and orientations towards HE. According to Andrade (2013) the women had cultural capital which came in the form of family members, including extended members, who had gone before them and attained a degree. They then passed this educational support in the form of cultural capital to these women. They were encouraged and lived in homes where education was valued and supported. “The belief in the ability to be successful” (p.17) was experienced by students from both their mothers and fathers. They believed in themselves and understood that “success took effort and that the rewards for education were great” (p.17). This was why students followed in the footsteps of their parents and applied the same educational principles and values to their pursuits. This was also reinforced by the work of Ball et al., (2002) if there was a value and belief within the family that HE participation was inevitable and to a certain extent unquestioned the family members would be more likely to proceed to HE.

The values a family has about education can make a difference in family members attending HE or not (Copper, 2017; Mc Eldowney, 2003). In Mc Eldowney's (2003) research, some of the differences she noted between families and their success within the community of Glace Bay were because "their family values for education were rewarded in later generations when credentials became valued commodities" (p.16). This also pointed to the intergenerational gap or the impact of historical family narratives. This gap can sometimes exist between generations relating to education credentials and the ability to translate them into economic gain which is dependent upon the familial and societal norms around educational achievement (Mc Eldowney, 2003).

The work of Tett (2000) explained that mature students clearly identified a community focus to their educational pursuits outside of the nuclear family and that they wanted to give something back to the community and this made their 'participation in HE acceptable' (p. 191; the work of Andrade, 2013 also supports this point) if it was for the greater good and not just a selfish pursuit. Finn (2017) would refer to this as "relations of connection to a collective" (p. 753) where the negotiations in order to succeed in HE were not necessarily just an individual pursuit but embedded within "relational and emotional negotiations" (p.754) within the family, extended family and community. Finn (2017) shifted the emphasis and highlighted the extremely important role that relationships played during family HE participation.

4.3 Identity, Roles and Higher Education

The process of student identity transformation for FGS who transition straight from school has been explored by various authors (Brooks & O'Shea, 2021; Danvers & Hinton-Smith, 2021; Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Reay, 2010) and the work Brooks et al. (2022) offer a valuable contribution. Brooks et al. (2022) explored students within HE in a process of transition, they are "transitioning to adulthood" a space where they find their "role in society" (p. 25). They examined identity from a social class perspective and that their student identity was only one of many identities and that they engage in identity work, asking questions about "what they want to become" (p. 25). They examined how certain policy discourses and media narratives perceived students as human capital, rational choosers or credential seekers (Brooks et al., 2022). When in actual fact they found their rationales for studying were dependent on if the courses were "available to them and were closely bound to their inner learning biographies,

that is, retrospective stories about learning and self-discovery” (Brooks et al., 2022, p. 99). They documented how students construct their learner identities by acknowledging the role of their experiences of hierarchies between disciplines, institutions and social classes all of which shaped their learners identities. This also influenced their sense of belonging or not in HE (Brooke et al., 2022). Sykes (2021) contended that there was a need to acknowledge the multiple and fluid identities of students, instead of perceiving them as rigid and singular.

Mc Donald’s (2021) work on how mother-daughter relationships influence the construction of learner identities of FG family girls was important in light of this research focus. She examined the process by which female students in Australia negotiate their gendered learner identities in relation to their mother’s unrealised aspirations and expectations. It demonstrated the methods these girls employed to balance familial allegiance with personal success as they were the FIF to attend HE. She concludes:

that working-class experiences of the transition into university can be different, where the relationship between mother and daughter can positively influence the construction of higher education identities (Mc Donald, 2021, p. 40)

Eiras and Huijser (2021) explored how Chinese students navigated and constructed their identities in the liminal space of a transnational University in China. They captured the fluidity of the student’s experiences and the challenges they face as they negotiate various value systems, cultures that resulted in a process of continual identity reconstruction. This process “is likely to have a profound impact on the ways in which these students see themselves and their place in the world into the future” (Eiras & Huijser, 2021, p. 219).

Roles and Self

Historically the role of the student has been based on an ideal, one in which, the individual is focused on educational pursuits as an independent learner and their attention not diluted by their domestic responsibilities as a mature student (Leathwood, 2006; Gammel, 2020). Estes (2011) noted that:

The line between what is expected of mothers and fathers seems to have blurred a bit in the lives of these [participants] student-parents. They believe that as parents (both male and female) they should provide their children with emotional and financial support, time, and attention (p. 207).

One of the participants in Tett’s (2000) research found that the role expectations of her were very set: she explained that:

'My mother and my husband can't see why I am doing this. They just see me as neglecting the kids and not doing the things I used to do in the community'...Participation in HE was acceptable only if it was seen as giving a better life to the kids (p. 191).

This participant was viewed by her family as a mother first and as a student second, being a student was only acceptable if it was a selfless pursuit that her children would ultimately gain from, her self-suffered as a result. This was heavily tied up with adult learner identity formation in HE and it was important to note that the experience of HE can challenge a mature student's "sense of themselves" (Brunton & Buckley, 2021, p. 2696). This process can involve the incorporation of a new learner identity as part of the HE process for mature students. Britton and Baxter's (1999) research was from a sociological perspective, focused on identity in relation to HE participation. They examined the "self as a reflexive project" and discussed the insights this approach can offer to the examination of becoming a mature student. (Britton & Baxter, 1999, p.179). They drew on the work of Giddens, (1991) and Beck, (1992) to illustrate 'the self' as something that was constantly created and negotiated; a component of a jigsaw in the construction of one's identity as a mature student. Britton and Baxter (1999) incorporated the narratives of both men and women and focused on the self-journey of becoming a mature student and looked at the gendered nature of conceptions of self. Britton and Baxter (1999) contend that men and women "tell different stories, which reflect not only differences in their life experiences but also in different understandings of self" (p. 192). While there was a multitude of research on mature women in HE and rightly so, mature male narratives in HE have not been researched to the same extent.

Roles

Historically a women's role in society was linked irrevocably to her gendered role in the home, responsible for all the domestic duties as the 'greedy institution' of the family was prioritised over her own individual educational ambitions (Coser & Coser, 1974). The roles that females play within the family home can give us an insight into the patriarchal issues that women face in society today and historically. The family home and the division of housework could be seen as a microcosm of the gendered nature and origins of gender inequality of roles in the home and society. Bianchi et al., (2000) succinctly explained that

Getting household work done involves cooperation, negotiation, and conflict among household members, usually requiring consensus but also generating potential resentment and disagreements among those who live together (p. 192).

Koster et al's (2022) study examined perceptions of fairness regarding the division of household labour, specifically housework and childcare. They found that unequal divisions of household labour, particularly in childcare, were often considered fair by both men and women, indicating a resistance to changing traditional gender roles. Adams and Golsch (2021) investigated the gender specific patterns and determinants of spillover, between work and family and not specifically education or HE participation but it was worth noting their recent conclusions that:

the differences for men and women in the effect of partner support on different types of inter-role conflicts indicate a still existing impact of traditional gender norms that connect femininity to house work and masculinity to employed work (p. 72).

The gendered division of labour in the family home was also examined in the work of Charles and Kerr (1988) while this research was carried out over thirty years ago, many of their key findings still hold true today as demonstrated in the work of Adams and Golsch (2021) above.

Charles and Kerr's (1988) research showed that if there was an egalitarian relationship before children are born in the family, this will return to the 'natural' situation where the women does the domestic duties and the men take on fully the breadwinner role, after children are born. They state that when women give up their jobs they also give up power. An example of this in Ireland would be the introduction of the marriage bar, when women, after getting married, had to give up their jobs. This began in the 1920s with the 1924 Civil Service regulation Act, this was initially focused at civil servants and was then expanded to include teachers in 1933. The focus initially was on the civil service but it was noted in the work of Mosca and Wright (2019) that throughout society it was implemented even within private organisations. This practice continued in Ireland until the 1970s. Mosca and Wrights (2019) research into the marriage bar utilizing the TILDA's longitudinal research database found that "women affected by the Marriage Bar have shorter working lives, lower individual income but higher wealth at the time of interview, more children and more educated children" (p.1). This side note on the marriage bar before returning to the work of Charles and Kerr (1988) demonstrates the push pull factors at a societal level, which dominated the lives of women in Ireland; which pulled them into the workforce and back into the home with very little agency, the structures had determined their roles.

Charles and Kerr (1988) concluded that, cooking was the responsibility of women and it was the most important task in the family home. Many women did not let their partners in the kitchen as that was their domain and even if a woman did work outside the home her cooking role was unaffected. Social class was not a factor and irrespective of social class it was the woman's role to cook, in order to be a proper wife one must cook (Charles & Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991).

The role of food in the family home cannot be underestimated, James and Curtis (2010) use Finch's (2007) concept of 'display' to examine the various ways families present and express their identity, unity and values to both themselves and the outside world. This concept of 'family display' emphasised the importance of family practices like eating food together and the role they played in affirming familial relationships and norms within the family (James & Curtis, 2010, p. 1163). Their work reinforced the centrality of the family meal and the significant place it held in the lives of family members, which therefore serves as an example of a 'family display'. The family meal involved family negotiations of family roles and contributed to the affirmation of family life. They make reference to the interwoven aspects of a perceived simple norm of everyday life (the family meal) and exposed the deeper aspects of the role food plays in the family. Noting that shared meals are seen as rituals which serve to reinforce family unity and identity, a way that family members express their sense of belonging through the practice of coming together and sharing food (James & Curtis, 2010).

In the work of Poulain (2017) he identified the family meal as a "highly normative system" and noted that it was "through the meal that children interiorize the rules and values of cleanliness, respect for others and sharing (the socialising dimension)" (p.138) or the temporal dimension to family life (Pirani et al., 2022). Poulain (2017) further explained that the family meal serves a function of defining roles. Notably in relation to the theoretical frame utilised within this research of Berger and Luckmann (1966) he states that:

The meal lies at the heart of the socialization process in the two senses of the word: it is a site of apprenticeship, where life rules governing a group are learned, and a place of sociality of sharing and conviviality. (Poulain, 2017, p. xvii)

This quote reinforces the socialisation functions which family members engage in during meal time but also forces one to think about a potential emotional connection to meal times for family members because as Poulain (2017) makes reference to the work of Halbwachs (1912) dated assertion that "the most important aspect of family life certainly appears to be the meal shared with one's wife and children..." (Poulain, 2017, p. 118).

The gendered discourse firmly places the importance of a woman's life on how she cares for her family (Christie et al., 2008) and to do less than was expected was to have failed at your primary role as a female, one which has been imbedded in the early years of life through the process of gender socialization (Edwards, 1993; Jenkins, 1996, Webber, 2017; Gouthro, 2005; Daniels, 2010; Alsop et al., 2008; Norton et al., 1998; Christie et al., 2008; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010). The work of Beagan et al, (2008) titled "It's Just Easier for Me to Do It" confirms that women bear the burden of foodwork in the home and that gender assumptions influenced the distribution of foodwork responsibilities. They specifically noted the impact of high standards in food preparation and cleanliness which often falls on women and further entrenches women in the gendered division of labour in the home. Another interesting observation from their work that the desire for women to minimise conflict in the home played a significant role in driving women to undertake a larger share of foodwork.

According to Gouthro (2005) homeplace, the place where the family resides, and its role has largely been ignored in HE research especially considering it is:

the first site for individual learning experiences. ... This is where individuals are initially situated within a larger societal context through factors such as class, culture and ethnicity. It is a place where values, beliefs, morals and goals are often discussed and negotiated (p. 10).

Gouthro (2005) identifies, was the pivotal role the homeplace plays in the socialization of individuals in society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Gouthro (2005) employs a Habermasian theoretical framework to examine the role of homeplace in the lives of mature female students. Gouthro (2005) situates the homeplace within the lifeworld, the location of daily experience, communication and the place where "all human experience is grounded" (p. 6). For Gouthro (2005) homeplace acts a filter for women to experience a return to education, their relationships formed within the home can act as a buffer to the educational stresses experienced by women as they return to education, which was supported by the work of Webber, (2017) as discussed in Chapter 3. Equally, the homeplace Gouthro (2005) explains has the ability to destroy individuals, create negative memories and experiences, which can haunt and scar women. These negative experiences within the homeplace may force women not to pursue education or be a motivating factor in their return to education. Either way women's role in the homeplace was a heavy weight to carry as the expectations placed on women to carry out the unpaid labour in the home and tension that exists for women between the home and education can be painful. Gouthro (2005) underscores that learning within families is relational and emotionally mediated. Her feminist analysis makes visible the gendered labour that underpins educational participation, demonstrating how women's

unpaid emotional and domestic work frequently sustains the learning trajectories of others while remaining undervalued or invisible (Gouthro, 2005). Gouthro (2005) also critiques the assumed neutrality of lifelong learning discourses, showing how classed and gendered inequalities structure, who has access to the time, cultural capital and resources needed to pursue formal education, and who is excluded from these very opportunities. By highlighting the complex negotiations, responsibilities and constraints that shape learning within households, Gouthro (2005) offers an important corrective to more individualised models of educational participation, foregrounding the family as a contested and unequal site of support, aspiration and struggle.

It can also leave women in a position where they have to choose between the familial role and their educational aspirations (Gouthro, 2005, Cox & Pascall, 1994; Webber 2017; Edwards, 1993, Stone and O'Shea, 2013, Merrill, 1999). For some participants in Merrill's (1999) research getting an education resulted in an increase in detachment from family and peers. Many younger women with younger children were leaving university because of childcare issues as homeplace 'role overload' had a major impact on their retention in HE (Scott et al., 1996).

In 1982 Van Meter and Argronow carried out research on the stresses of multiple roles among married college women and concluded that if women were happy with the childcare arrangement for their children, and their husbands supported their educational efforts, this translated into low strain which means that these women were more likely to succeed in HE. Furthermore, Van Meter and Argronow (1982) noted a socio-economic dimension to their findings. If the husband of the student had a HE degree, they were more likely to support their wife's educational pursuits. Conversely a piece of research which supports the socio-economic influence of a husband's educational level and social class on a women's completion of her degree was the work of Scott et al. (1996). They found that women in the study whose husbands were from a low social class, left education due to of lack of support. This reinforces the influence of a husband's educational level on a woman's degree prospects. This also supports the collective nature of the HE experience because if it was just the individual who was experiencing HE, these women would successfully complete HE.

The gendered challenges of HE participation for mature students were significant for the participants in Stone and O'Shea's (2013) research they identified distinct differences in HE experiences based on gender. The men in their research linked their educational pursuits directly to their role as 'breadwinners' and the emphasis of this instrumental role was also identified in Reay's (2002) research on mature students. Women on the other hand involved the juggling and integration of interrupted study with caring responsibilities and noted these

caring responsibilities were always prioritised, as women carried the majority of the domestic load –

As long as family responsibilities are given priority, and the potentially competing responsibilities of study are not overly interfering with family obligations, then study can be seen as acceptable (Stone & O'Shea, 2013, p. 105).

The women in Stone and O'Shea's (2013) study found time management extremely difficult as they aimed to fit their university obligations into and after meeting the demands of others. Males in the study never mentioned either childcare or housework, this was only discussed by the females.

One outcome for the mature female's participation in HE was that while they spent less time with their children, the quality of the time improved and the way in which they were viewed by their children had changed: "being at university had raised their status in the eyes of their children, particularly older boys, who now treated their mothers with more respect" (Stone & O'Shea, 2013, p. 100). The overarching theme from Stone and O'Shea's (2013) research was the multiplicity of women's roles versus that of singular one-dimensional focused nature of the male role and experiences. HE participation by students who have caring responsibilities was a juggling act leading to role conflict (Zart, 2019; Markle, 2015). According to O'Shea (2016) a juggle worth engaging in because the experience of HE participation has the capacity "to provide an opportunity to rewrite life scripts and redefine prescribed gender roles in a powerfully liberating way" (p. 75).

As argued by Edwards (1993), this ability to redefine roles arises from the ability of women to translate their increased educational level and apply their acquired knowledge "to formulate and evaluate arguments" and to enable them to engage in this renegotiation on the "division of household labour with their partners" (Edwards, 1993, p. 105) which in turn had shifted the power balance within the family. Tynes (1990) conducted quantitative longitudinal research on marital interaction and satisfaction between spouses. The findings suggest that when the female in a family increased their educational status, this led to an increase in the level of marital satisfaction for both partners. Interestingly when husbands had gained more educational credentials than their wives both husband and wife reported "less than happy marriages" (p. 153). Suitor (1987) notes that when conflict emerged in the family, students were more inclined to take on their student role instead of their family role, enacting the student role was more beneficial in a situation where they were being challenged.

A number of studies examined the ways mature students engaged in the renegotiation of their roles within the family in order to resolve the conflict that emerged between their role as student and that of carer (Moss, 2005; McGivney, 2003; Gouthro, 2005; Alsop et al., 2008; Webber, 2017; O'Shea, 2015, 2016; Stone & O'Shea, 2013; Zart, 2019; West, 2014). Research by Alsop et al. (2008) examined the gendered nature of being a mature student (Stone & O'Shea, 2013; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010) as women have historically been associated with the role of carers and the males have been associated as the non-carers. This had implications on how the women in Alsop et al.'s. (2008) study were viewed by others and on how they engaged in the reconstruction of their identity.

Students of both genders experience their role as carers as important, but females more often feel that aspect of their everyday life as a duty, which remains such even when they acquire a new role as student (Alsop et al., 2008, p. 629).

Alsop et al. (2008) found that when the HE institutions took the student's caring responsibilities into consideration this had a "positive impact on their ability to study successfully" (p. 633). Unfortunately, they also noted that there was a distinct lack of an 'overarching institutional commitment' to the accommodation of students who had caring responsibilities. At a macro policy level their research indicates that policy needs to consider a more effective approach to facilitating the participation of student carers. Instead of, as Bejarano and Valverde (2012) referred to as, the universities and their goal of 'manufacturing sameness' which essentially aims at the opposite of that which was proposed by Alsop et al. (2008) of creating a caring culture within universities. More often than not HE institutions strip students of their family roles and social contexts and aim to acculturate them within the University context. O'Shea (2016) builds on this discussion of manufacture of 'sameness' and stresses that the University should move away from this process and highlight that the challenge for universities "to work effectively with what learners have rather than expect them to change" (O'Shea, 2016, p.75, also O'Shea, 2015, p.254).

There is a tension between the public life of the mature female student in education and the private family life of the student (Buckingham et al., 2006; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010; Tett, 2000) to the point where this tension had a direct impact on some of the students and their necessity to either keep these two identities of mother and student separate or to connect them (Edwards, 1993). It was not the student's preference to separate these identities in Edwards' (1993) study, but it arose out of a necessity to avoid conflict because in some cases they were not supported by family members and friends in their decision to attend HE. Some of the mature female students in Edwards' (1993) study compartmentalize their educational work and aim at all times that their families must not suffer because of their

educational pursuits. Some women in the study found that it was necessary to 'shut off' the mental presence of their families while studying. Education provided these women with a space where "nobody could interrupt them or make demands on them in the way they did at home and their thoughts turned to big social issues rather than the detailed domestic ones" (Edwards, 1993, p. 89). Some women in the study were never able to mentally separate themselves from their families and their domestic selves, they remained connected, were happy to sit in the identity space of being "students who were mother and partners rather than one or the other" (Edwards, 1993, p. 90). University, according to the female participants in Quinn's (2003) study, represented a space where "they could not be swallowed up by their families", a haven to escape, an interval (Quinn, 2003, p. 453). Additionally, Quinn's (2003) findings support in part the work of Edwards (1993) where she discusses the separateness of the two spaces of university and the home.

Quinn's (2003) research illustrated that there was an aim by the female students to maintain a total separation of the two spheres: "much of the significance of the University space lay in what it was a space away from" (p. 458) the family. This process of compartmentalization and separation consequently meant for the women that their families and home life became an invisible experience in the HE context, even for the women who choose to remain connected to the family. FGS who have caring responsibilities and engage in HE, institutions need to change, rather than expecting the student cohort to adapt to the predominantly male defined academic mode of being in university. The institutions must acknowledge that students arrive with overflowing virtual handbags full of 'invisible experiences' which are considered irrelevant in the HE contexts (Daniels, 2010; Marandet & Wainwright, 2009; Edwards, 1993) imagine if they were harnessed.

4.3.1 Virtual Handbags- invisible family life and recognition

Daniels (2010) in her examination of women learners in vocational education employed the term 'virtual handbag' to explain their invisible experiences they bring to the educational context. "These women are drawn into a formal learning environment in which their everyday roles and homeplace experiences are invisible or misunderstood (Daniels, 2010, p. 77). She uses the term virtual handbag which was in line with a concept previously developed by Pat Thomson (2002) when she incorporated the term 'virtual school bag' to explain all the knowledge and skills that children arrive with into the classroom. They have acquired this

knowledge outside of the classroom in various contexts, in the home and civil society. She explains how women's homeplace experiences are so misunderstood that it creates issues for them in education. The formal and informal spheres of learning are entirely incongruent with one another, as women's "everyday sits outside of what is acknowledged as learning, so education sits outside the everyday for many women, in practice as well as in conceptualisation" (Daniels, 2010, p. 79). These handbags, according to Daniels (2010), contain reasons why women have returned to education and hold their personal orientation towards learning. Unfortunately, in the education system these 'virtual handbags' remain shut because the contents are not valued (Edwards, 1993). Potentially the women or men engaging in HE are on a voyage of visibility and or recognition for that which they hold in their handbags.

In echoing this notion of visibility, West et al. (2013) employed the work of Honneth to stress the importance of recognition in the education process. Recognition is an intersubjective process because it is not until we have interacted with another and seen ourselves from their perspective have we developed an identity (West et al., 2013).

By employing Honneth, West et al. (2013) shifted the focus to the role of interaction and the undeniable impact of the mutual recognition process. Fleming and Finnegan (2010) in their research undertaken as part of the RANLHE research project, posited that students were not just seeking status and prestige, but recognition, and more specifically intersubjective recognition. West et al. (2013) examined the role of the family through the first order of recognition. Explained by Honneth (1995), this was at a micro level of the family, "to be loved and this then teaches us to love, it builds self-confidence and develops within an individual the important skill of learning to love oneself" (p. 125). The second form was where the individual develops "recognition of the autonomous person, bearing rights in law, is the basis for self-respect" (Honneth, 1995, p. 125). Here they explore the connection between the individual and society based on gaining an understanding and "possessing a kind of shared dignity of persons as morally responsible agents and as capable of participating in public deliberations" (p.125). This community based second form then leads to the third form which Honneth refers to and West et al. (2013) clarify as self-esteem. West et al. (2013) discussed that HE would be a good example of a social institution where the third form can be identified, it was a place where one is both seen and recognised, where self-esteem can grow. West et al. (2013) also point to the link between self-respect and the outcome of a university degree, which may mean that you are seen and recognised by your community and an individual's self-esteem then grows, transformations occur.

4.4 Transformations

The student parent dyad (Cooper, 2013) their relationship with HE and the family does not have clear boundaries. The dyad moves and the individuals move between the social institutions and as they move, they change roles and sometimes their identity shifts and the transformations happen, at an individual level and a collective familial level. Transformation theory (Mezirow, 1991) zooms in on the individual and pulls focus on a micro, inward looking perspective, while it does not according to Fleming (2016):

that individual problems are shared and only understood properly when seen as such. The shared nature of individual problems and experiences is not just a useful step toward transformation but an essential aspect of knowing and of learning (p. 22)

Unfortunately, there was no deliberation on the possible effects of these individual transformations on the family (Taylor, 2009; Webber, 2015).

Fleming (2002) asserted that transformation theory does not account for the social dimension of transformation. He integrated the work of Jürgen Habermas in order to elucidate the social, in transformation theory.

Fleming (2016) achieves this through an acknowledgment that “democratic participation as an important means of self- development that produces individuals who are more tolerant of difference sensitive to reciprocity and better able to engage in discourse” (Fleming, 2016, p. 22). This critique of transformation theory has relevance but adding the social dimension was more at a structural macro level of engagement and does not explain fully the changes on a more micro level, when one engages with another who was themselves experiencing a transformation (For example an individual in HE as a member of a family). Mezirow (1991) contended that the process of transformative learning begins with a ‘disorienting dilemma’: as students and mature students navigate the HE space they are presented with a dilemma, “to stay with the old ways of making meaning that have lost their ability to usefully guide understanding and action or search for new ones” (Fleming, 2016, p. 22). One could question if this disorienting dilemma was only felt at an individual level or if the dilemma leaks outwards into the collective (the family). Fleming (2016) explained that engagement in the struggle for recognition, motivated within the students, a search for a resolution to their dilemma “to stay in the world circumscribed by old experiences of misrecognition or respond to the struggle to be recognized and acknowledged”. (Fleming, 2016, p. 22). For many students they engage in HE and it is not just the individual student who wants the recognition but potentially the family also wants to transform and be recognised. Mezirow’s (1991)

theory of perspective transformation focused on the change to a person's interpretive frameworks. We employ these frameworks in order to make meaning from our experiences. Transformation occurs because of the changes to the interpretative frameworks this was an important point in light of this research. The work of Mezirow was not the overarching theoretical framework employed in this research, but one cannot ignore its relevance and the foundation it continues to provide for education research. It offers the basis for wonder, about the prospect of building towards a collective transformation perspective, one where familial influence and experience are incorporated into the conversation.

Hoggan, et al. (2017) captured the essence of the potential capacity of transformational effects when they noted that it may be more "accurate to talk about overlapping trajectories of transformations" (p. 52). They bring the conversation and theory to a point which very much resonates with this research topic, notably when they refer to 'intersubjectivity'. Their work introduces three concepts to perspective transformation: that of continuity, intersubjectivity and emancipatory praxis. They offer these concepts as a means by which Mezirow's theory may grow and transform itself as a theory. This focus as stated will be in their addition to the conversation on intersubjectivity, which also resonates with the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 20).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) note the importance of intersubjectivity and they place an emphasis in their theory on the intersubjective: "I cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others" (p. 23) or when they discuss intersubjective sedimentation and its role in the intergenerational transmission of experiences through shared experiences. To expound on the work of Hoggan et al. (2017) it was important because they note that experience was intersubjective and that it was impossible to atomise an individual from the society in which they reside. They aim to push back on the criticisms of Mezirow's individualistic emphasis in the transformation process. They note that Mezirow does in fact make reference to the intersubjective "that meaning perspectives develop out of interaction, culture and language of one's own social contexts" (Hoggan, et al., 2017, p. 55). They explain that due to shared experiences and meaning perspectives it creates a bond which gives people a sense of continuity: these meaning perspectives "serve to maintain our social connections and the fundamental feeling of belonging and being accepted by others" (Hoggan, et al., 2017, p. 56). This continuity was fine until there was a challenge to "our meanings, values and social connections" (Hoggan, et al., 2017, p. 56). This gives rise to "unpleasant edge emotions" when one was out of one's comfort zone and when these meanings become challenged (Hoggan et al., 2017, p. 56). Being part of a collective like a family could serve the function of being a safe space where one can reflect

in a supportive environment, a space where you are accepted for who you are, potentially the family was that space, where “alternative interpretations” can begin to unfold... we may even be more able to reflect than we would be able to on our own” (Hoggan et al., 2017, p. 56). This points to the role potentially the family could play in the individualistic process of transformation and opens up the possibility with the incorporation of intersubjectivity to the conversation, that collective transformations are possible or that the collective may in fact play a central role in the individualistic transformation process.

Wainwright and Marandet (2010) contend that being in HE can assist social mobility and it has a “potentially transformative experience for both parent and child and impacting on the individual learner as well as their family” (p. 456). Could this be considered a collective transformation as such? Webber (2015) explores how the identity of mothers transformed during their engagement in HE and she noted the impact HE had on their familial relationships. “Although the strand of mother was important for them, it was not fixed and was a fluid and evolving part of who they were. For the women, as their constructions of themselves changed, so did their understanding of motherhood” (Webber, 2015, p. 216). The mothers in Webber’s (2015) study through the acquisition of knowledge transformed their parenting practices and this led to transformations in their “awareness of their children’s needs but also enabled them to change how they parented” and in some cases “revolutionised her whole identity as a mother” (Webber 2015, p. 217).

In her study the transformations were not limited to the student’s individual identity transformation but “can also effect change for their husbands through transformation of the mature women students” and through “identity change in the women, meaning schemes can be reformed for the husbands” (Webber, 2015, p. 223). This was previously discussed in Section 4.2. Webber (2015) contended that the transformation for men were more likely to be “a transformation of behaviours rather than transformed thinking and ways of being” (p. 224) as the mother’s educational experience caused “transformations in the husbands parenting approaches” (p. 223). The women in Webber’s (2015) study experienced both guilt and jealousy and caused them to let go of previous responsibilities in order to make space for their HE:

Although the women felt guilty that they were not there, they also experienced jealousy as their identity strand of being a mother could be construed as being threatened or taken over by their husbands. Previously, the women were responsible for organising the children’s activities; stepping back from this role gave them mixed emotions (p. 221).

These women were in conflict with themselves and their identity as a student and as mother. Their experience reemphasized the importance of education and its role in the lives of their children and the transformative experience it was for all members of the family. An outcome of the women's experiences in education resulted in changes in family life and:

These changes to family life demonstrated to the women that there was value in the adaptations that had been introduced to the household, changing their conception of HE study from a selfish act to one that benefitted the family (Webber, 2015, p. 223).

HE was a familial experience not solely an individual one, it was fraught with conflict, transformations and sometimes forced transformations which can result in a new social reality for the family.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined three interconnected areas of literature, relationships, roles and identity. Identity appeared as an underlying thread running across all sections, shaping and shaped by the everyday interactions of family members. The first section reviewed how higher education participation affects relationships in the home, focusing on parental partnerships, sibling dynamics and the varying forms of support offered by extended family members. The discussion of roles, identity and HE, highlighted how the demands of study can unsettle established routines, with women often carrying the weight of these shifts. The notion of the "virtual handbag" drew attention to the often invisible work that takes place in the home as students seek recognition and legitimacy while navigating HE. The chapter concluded by opening the question of whether, and under what conditions, participation in HE by a dyadic pair might contribute to a broader collective transformation within the family.

Across these strands, a central question arises: do existing accounts fully capture the complexity of how families reorganise themselves in response to HE participation, or do they risk overlooking the subtle and ongoing processes through which relationships, roles and identities are continuously remade? Chapter 5 presents the theoretical lens for this research, utilising Berger and Luckmann (1966) to explore how meaning, knowledge and everyday life are constructed within the family context.

CHAPTER 5 – THEORETICAL LENS

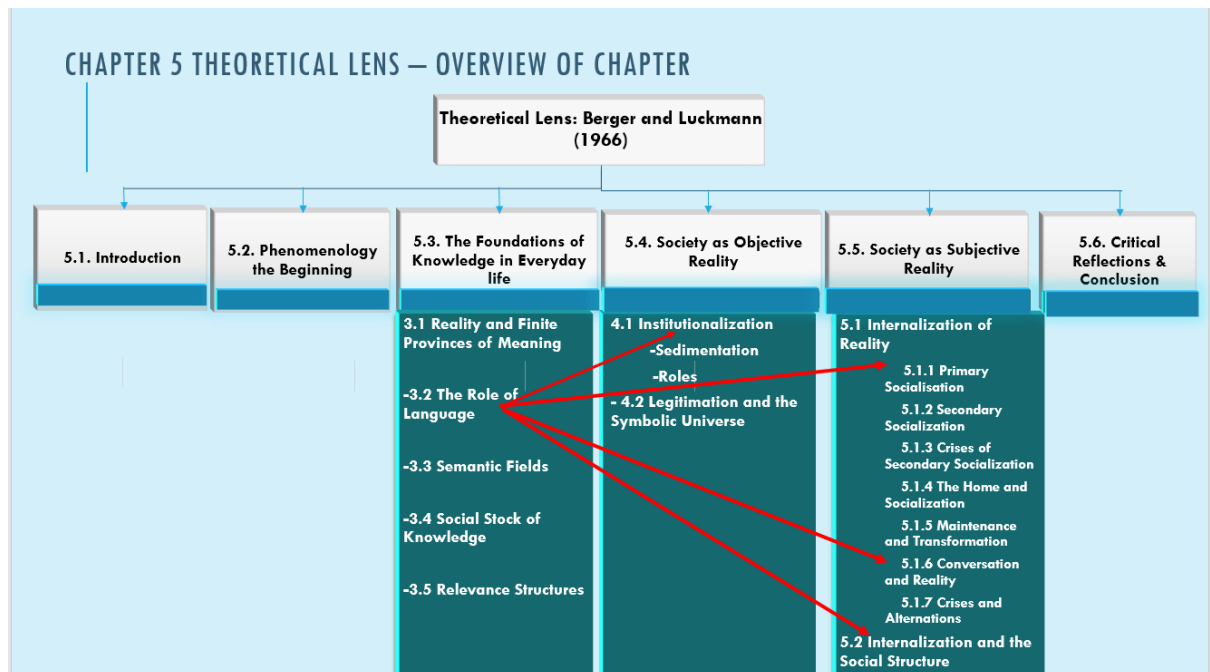


Fig 5. 1 Chapter 5 -Theoretical lens overview

5.1 Introduction

“The original reality of childhood is “Home”.

(Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 143).

This chapter examines the work of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) “The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge” which was adopted as the overarching theoretical frame for this research. Chapters 3 and 4 served two functions: firstly to set the theoretical and literature landscape which has dominated family and HE research, secondly to understand why it was important for this research to extend the application of a theoretical interpretation of families in HE, to the underutilized theoretical framework of Berger and Luckmann (1966). The applicability and usefulness of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) work to the research findings are deferred to the discussion in Chapter 10. This decision was in order to discuss the theoretical lens in conjunction and set it within the context and discussion of the research findings.

To aid in the navigation of this chapter Fig 5.1 provides an outline of the six sections to this chapter. It was problematic to explore the breadth of their theory within the spatial limitations of the chapter, so the aim, while extremely difficult, was to present an in-depth

analysis, with criticality. (Section 5.2) presents a brief introduction to phenomenology and its roots because it was important to situate this theory within its broader framework of origin.

(Section 5.3) examines the foundations of knowledge in everyday life which encompassed exploring reality, finite provinces of meaning and the role of language, which permeates several sections of this chapter. (Section 5.4) examines Society as objective reality, which will explore their concepts of institutionalization, legitimation and the symbolic universe. (Section 5.5) Society as Subjective Reality was divided into two sections, Internalization of reality (Primary and secondary socialisation, conversation and reality etc.) and Internalization and the social structure. (Section 5.6) encompasses critical reflections, methodological implications.

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory were employed in order to provide one theoretical perspective to the question of why? The 'whys' were generated from the overarching research question. There are several whys. Does HE permeate the family home and its members, why does it have such an impact on the family, roles, relationships and language?

This theoretical frame assisted in the interpretation of the research findings and provided new interpretations of the research phenomenon of FGF in HE (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Merrill (1999) would argue that "without interpretation and location within a theoretical framework the data becomes merely a description" (p. 58). The Discussion Chapter 10 situates the research findings within this theory and the greater body of literature, while noting that the main purpose of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work was to "engage in systematic theoretical reasoning" (p.18).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) were selected as the theoretical lens because their work was relational in that it focused on the socialisation process and they stressed the importance and role of language in the transmission of reality and knowledge. This research focused on the family as a collective, experiencing the effects of HE and pointed to a good match theoretically with Berger and Luckmann (1966) in order to extend the understanding of the phenomenon. One could propose that their theory was dated or irrelevant (Sica, 2016), as it was written in the 1960s but their concepts have permeated many theorists who followed them (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens 1984). Bourdieu, Berger and Luckmann view the world as both objectified and subjectified; both are seeking to bridge this epistemological gap (Jovanovic, 2021). They both also see the body as a locus of social influences; in their theories they center the role of language in social life (Jovanovic, 2021). Bourdieu employs "Habitus which is seen as a disposition based on a specific stock of knowledge which structures our experience and action" (Dreher, 2016, p. 63) as his bridge. In a not dissimilar way, Berger and Luckmann

(1966) concentrate on the dialectical relationship of subjective and objective reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) take into consideration “the connection of action and meaning as well as the relevance structure of knowledge” (Dreher, 2016, p. 62-63), it was essentially social action which bridges ‘the gap’ between the structure and agency in their work.

While Berger and Luckmann (1966) are often presented as neutral their work, their work is also situated within a particular ideological and historical conjuncture. Recognising this location it is important because it reminds us that their supposedly general account of social reality is already framed by specific western liberal assumptions about order, agency and change.

The next section Phenomenology and its relationship with Berger & Luckmann (1966), presents an introduction to phenomenology, to set the context for the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966).

5.2 Phenomenology and its relationship with Berger & Luckmann (1966)

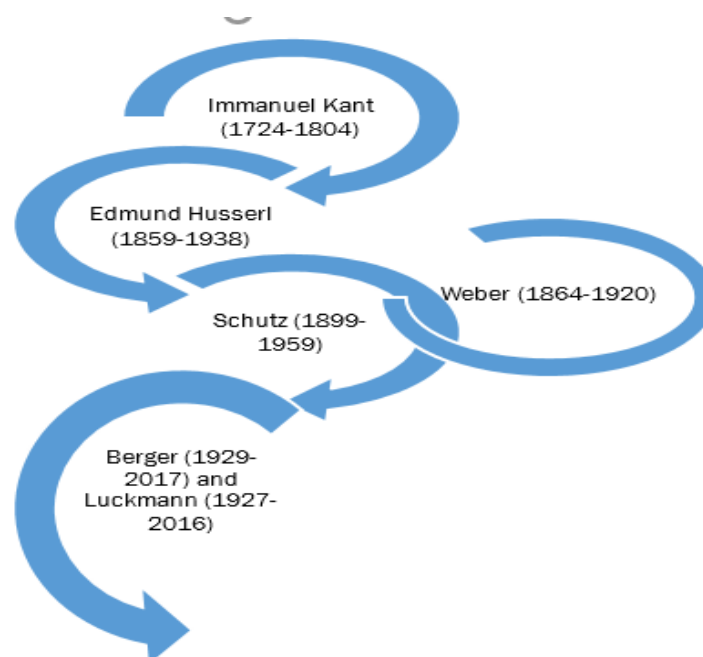


Fig 5. 2 Origins of Phenomenology

This section provides a very brief introduction to the origins of phenomenology in order to situate Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) work within the broader changes that have occurred within phenomenology. The origins of phenomenology can be traced back to the work of Immanuel Kant. Kant considered that the mind has the ability to structure the world for us. As human beings how we perceive the world is dependent upon how our minds process it.

Therefore according to Kant the world is a product of our own minds; it was external to us, an objective reality as such. Kant posited that when one undertakes a study, we must look at how consciousness operates and the individual's perception of the world; while also acknowledging that the consciousness creates the world. Fundamentally, he explained that it was about creation and perception. The aim of phenomenology was to seek to see the world from the participant's perspective. Most importantly, phenomenology focuses on everyday life, which is created by everyday interactions. Phenomenologists zoom in on the practical consciousness, which is the second nature automatic pilot form of consciousness, where human social life action and interaction occurs.

Edmund Husserl was the first to develop pure phenomenology within the field of philosophy. The main focus of his work was to examine human beings "stream of consciousness" (1962, p. 40).

There was a shift away from human consciousness as a sole focus and it moved phenomenology towards gaining an understanding of the world from the perspective of individuals, while also noting that they exist in the world which they share with other individuals and interact with. In the 20th Century phenomenology concentrated on the shared nature of reality, this meant the introduction of culture, to the phenomenological conversation. This shift in emphasis recognised the influence culture can have on the way we perceive and make sense of the world around us. This also directed the focus of phenomenology to inter-subjectivity and how as individuals our experiences of the world are shaped collectively by culture; this shared sense of reality became the job of phenomenology which was to examine how culture affects the shared experiences of individuals.

Alfred Schutz (1967) applied phenomenology to sociology. He initially connected the work of Husserl and focused on the consciousness, incorporating Weber's action theory. He was aiming to bridge the gap and gain an understanding of the daily mundane lived experience known as the lifeworld on an individual level, collective level and more macro social level. The culture of a specific group creates the common-sense almost automatic way of being in the world. It was the taken for granted, not thought about, this was called a 'natural attitude'. This natural attitude was an individual's way of determining what was normal and what was not, it guides our thoughts and our actions (Muzzetto, 2015). How we act as individuals and how we interact therefore becomes the central feature of social life and the lifeworld. There was a temporal element to this in that the lifeworld was created and maintained over time (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Williams, 1977).

Shutz's (1967) important contribution had methodological implications for phenomenology with the distinction made between first order categories and second order categories. This distinction was centered on consciousness, the consciousness of the participants in research; he calls this first order categories, consisting of the ways they think about and understand the world. Second order categories are how the researcher as a social scientist takes the first order descriptions of the participants and aims to explain the participant experiences and apply second order categories to make sense of the participant's first order categories. The aim according to Schutz (1967) as a social researcher was to reconstruct the participant's lifeworld. This had direct methodological implications for this research and meant that the aim as a researcher was to reconstruct the participant's lifeworld and to reflexively understand the application process of second order categories, to understand the participant's first order categories. I will refer back to this point in the Methodology Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3.

According to Schutz all human life was the sum of the use of typifications within the practical consciousness of individuals. Within a specific lifeworld individuals will share the majority of typifications, this then facilitates interaction. More often than not typifications are in the practical consciousness on a subconscious level. Shifting the focus of phenomenology towards typifications moves it away from an individualistic focus and explains how individuals first order categories are shared. Which therefore links the individual inter-subjectively and their shared meanings to each other and the lifeworld.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) were influenced heavily by the work of Schutz (Muzetto, 2015). They attempted to incorporate the work of Durkheim (his idea that society makes individuals) and Weber (individuals make society) into their work; acknowledging that both theorists occupy different theoretical positions on the structure-action spectrum.

In this context Berger and Luckmann's (1966) combination of Husserl, Schutz, Weber, Durkheim, Marx, and Mead can also be seen as an attempt to stabilise a particular liberal view of modern society. Knoblauch and Wilke (2016) suggest that some often miss how the social construction of reality sought to provide a shared framework for diversifying western sociology of knowledge, one that set aside strong materialistic views and emphasised meaning interaction and institutional knowledge. Jovanovic (2021) adds that even though Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Bourdieu both try to bridge objectivism and subjectivism they do so from very different political positions. Bourdieu from a left-critical stance and Berger and Luckmann from a more liberal conservative one.

With the addition of “Marx (theory of practice added to Weber’s theory of action) and Mead (theory of socialization to Durkheim’s theory of institutions) as mediators” (Vandenberghe, 2018, p. 409) and which is evident in their work. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued the possibility of bridging the gap between objectivism and subjectivism in their book.

Society does indeed possess objective facticity. And society is indeed built up by activity that expresses subjective meaning. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 18)

From this position Berger and Luckmann (1966) devised their central research questions “how is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities? How is it possible that human activity should produce a world of things?”(Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 18). The following three sections (5.3, 5.4, 5.5,) of this chapter will offer a more detailed discussion of their theory. Firstly, Section 5.3 will consider the Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday life, Section 5.4 Society as Objective reality and lastly Section 5.5 Society and Subjective Reality.

5.3 The Foundations of knowledge in Everyday Life

Berger and Luckmann, (1966) asserted that knowledge guides behaviour and the focus for their work was the world of the everyday life, which was taken-for granted in the lived experiences of the members of society. The world was primarily perceived by the ordinary members of society and it originates in their “thoughts and actions and it is maintained by these” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.20), the world was constructed through intersubjective common-sense. They focused on the purely descriptive method in their work, which they considered to be empirical and not scientific.

The next section will examine five key areas to explain Berger and Luckmann’s perspective on the foundations of knowledge in everyday life.

1. Reality and Finite Provinces of Meaning
2. The Role of Language
3. Semantic Fields
4. Social Stock of Knowledge
5. Relevance Structures

5.3.1. Reality and Finite Provinces of meaning

The aim of Berger and Luckmann’s type of phenomenological analysis was to unearth the “layers of experience” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 21) and more specifically the shared

nature of the everyday life. They noted that there was a reality par excellence; this was the everyday reality and it occupies a privileged position of paramount reality. The multiple realities one may move between can cause a shock “as caused by the shift in attentiveness that the transition entails” (p. 21). An example they draw on would be the transition from sleeping and dreaming, to being awake, which gives rise to the natural attitude which was how one perceives the reality of everyday life.

However, if you occupied another reality this would be understood as experiencing a ‘finite province of meaning’. An example could be prayer or religious activities or the world of play of children, or any instance where a person was “transported into another world” ... only to “return to reality” (p. 25) paramount reality. The work of Hoffman (2016) applied ‘provinces of meaning’ to an examination of the use of simulations by pilots, safety engineers and athletes (p. 115). Hoffman (2016) acknowledged the importance of the concept ‘finite provinces of meaning’ but was critical of the lack of in-depth attention Berger and Luckmann (1966) gave to this important topic. Finite provinces of meaning were also expressed by Berger and Luckmann as “turning away of attention from the reality of everyday life” (p. 25) or “a leap” (p. 26) as a form of escapism. Language played a role in the interpretation of the experiences of ‘finite provinces of meaning’; it grounded the individual as ‘the leap’ from finite provinces of meaning back to paramount reality. Time also played a central role in the lives of individuals: it orders our existence and gives structure to the everyday life. As an example for students their experiences of HE was governed by a timetable. “All my existence in this world is continuously ordered by its time is indeed enveloped by it” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 27). The temporal structures that exist in everyday life allow us to structure events and allows us to reorient ourselves, should we lose track of time, time allows us to re-enter everyday life. When time passes by quickly because one was engaged in a finite province of meaning, time brings one back to paramount reality, a reorientation occurs to the present (e.g. you need to be somewhere or do something at a specific time). Language facilitates individuals in dealing with finite provinces of meaning in two ways; firstly, it facilitates the reorientation process of the individual back to the present (Someone asks you a question) as previously explained and secondly it assists in the transposition (“transposes”) of the meaning in a dream for example into the reality of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) .

Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained that when one encounters a new situation like for example HE, which can bring one out of your comfort zone as a FGS, because it challenges one’s reality. This can become problematic because you have not yet ‘routinized’ it (HE) because it was new to you. One must gain the language, new knowledge and skills potentially to be able to deal with the new situation of HE. More often than not “as long as routines of

everyday life continue without interruption they are apprehended as unproblematic” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 24). Therefore, a FGS’s experience of HE could be perceived as problematic. Language assists people in deriving understanding from their experiences of ‘finite provinces of meaning’ and in their navigation of everyday life, the next section will examine the role of language in the work of Berger and Luckmann, (1966).

5.3.2. The Role of Language

Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained that the reality of everyday life was an intersubjective world, which involved interactions between people where language played an imperative role in our process of understanding and meaning making. “I cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 23). It was language which gave order to the world into objects to be apprehended.

For Berger and Luckmann (1966) the patterns of everyday life exist in the typificatory schemes. These schemes are akin to frameworks, or generalised patterns it was how we understood the world and interact with it and they have an impact on the interactions between two individuals. The typificatory schemes are less about norms and more about more generalised patterns of interaction and understanding. For example, a typificatory scheme might be the general way in which people greet each other or in HE it might involve the roles and expectations of being a student. Typificatory schemes are connected to habituation and institutionalization because human beings need these as a basis for action in order to structure their existence through the “development of patterned social interactions” and “to provide the stability necessary for action and survival” (Lafferty, 1977, p. 142). Within interactions both parties will have typificatory schemes and sometimes these may be modified as individuals are engaged in constant negotiations of these because it is a reciprocal process.

The major link between the individual and the structure or the intersection between the objective and the subjective lie in the explanation by Berger and Luckmann (1966) of the social structure. The social structure was made up of both typifications and the recurrent patterns of interaction:

Social structure is the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. As such social structure is an essential element of everyday life (p. 33).

As human beings we are engaged with the social structure because it is fully embedded within the daily lived experience. But it was more than just intersubjective relationships as we are also surrounded by objects and artefacts such as pottery books or weapons and they have a 'subjective intention'.

An archaeologist will readily testify to such difficulties (of trying to work out a subjective intention of an object) but the very fact that he can overcome them and reconstruct from an artefact the subjective intentions of men (and presumably women) whose society may have been extinct for millennia is eloquent proof of the enduring power of human objectifications" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 35).

Language is a sign system, it is critical for human society and language is a form of objectified reality in the way people understand the world of objects and their meaning, have conversations and interact (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The centrality of language to everyday life was reaffirmed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) "everyday life is above all life with and by means of the language I share with my fellow men. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life" (p. 37) and in conversation it gives one an insight into the subjective intentions of both parties. Their analysis of language was summed up in the following quote:

Language is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 37).

Language was the mechanism by which the intergenerational transmission of knowledge occurred. There was subjectivity and objectivity associated with language, in that it can make your life 'more real' but also allows one to engage in the objectification of one's experience because it is a sign system, shared by others it forces human beings to engage in its rules. Language has a "transcending and integrating power" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 39).

5.3.3. Semantic fields

For Berger and Luckmann (1966) language also constructed semantic fields or zones of meaning as it made it possible for individuals to accumulate classification schemes in order to be able to engage in everyday life and communicate with each other. Berger and Luckmann (1966) also acknowledged that there were 'semantic fields' which are governed by 'domain

specific' knowledge, for example specialist disciplines or professional domains like medicine or law. These are made up of particular linguistic objectifications which give order to the daily lives of individuals, for example vocabulary, grammar and syntax. It becomes problematic for individuals if they engage with a semantic field without the required language, for example FGS in HE. It was through semantic fields that biographical and historical experience was "objectified retained and accumulated" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 41). The accumulation of experience within the semantic fields, which was a selective process, gave rise to a social stock of knowledge. Then engagement between individuals on a daily basis was influenced by the collective engagement with the social stock of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

5.3.4. The Social Stock of Knowledge

The social stock of knowledge was encountered by individuals and shared by common participation on a daily basis. The social stock of knowledge gave people parameters around their lives, about the position they occupy, what was expected of them and what was not. Recipe knowledge was the basic knowledge we have in order to be able to participate in everyday life pragmatically. "Recipe knowledge does not concern anything except what I have to know for my present and possible future pragmatic purposes" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 42). The social stock of knowledge was made up of the recipes which are habituated ways of both thinking and acting which allow individuals to engage with and master routine problems of everyday life. There was a spectrum within the social stock of knowledge where there was a differentiation of information. An individual may possess very detailed information about that which is relevant to them on a daily basis and more general watered down information which the individual perceives as more remote. The social stock of knowledge provides individuals with the typificatory schemes necessary for routines, for engaging with others and with more varied experiences in everyday life. The world of individuals is dictated to by routines, the ability an individual possesses, to know 'what to do when' was important for how individuals navigate their daily lives (for example students timetables in HE). For FGS they may not have the required social stock of knowledge which may mean they do not know how to act in HE but over time they will gain the typifications to feel like they belong.

5.3.5. Relevance Structures

Knowledge of everyday life was structured in terms of relevance, according to Berger and Luckmann, (1966) what was relevant to an individual and what was not, with an

acknowledgement that there are overlaps between people's relevance structures. Relevance structures guide our interactions with family members, friends and acquaintances. They determine what we discuss with whom and when, depending on our understanding of their relevance structures. The social distribution of knowledge in society matters because not everyone has access to knowledge and not all knowledge is relevant to everyone because it is socially distributed. What one will discuss with one person may not be discussed with another due to their position in society, status, or determined by the knowledge they have or do not have about a particular topic or area of expertise. HE students may choose only to discuss their acquired HE knowledge with other students or may possibly choose to share with family members.

I share my professional expertise with colleagues but not with my family and I may share with nobody my knowledge of how to cheat at cards (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 46).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) made reference to the family in this quote and acknowledged that at times the family may not be involved in the knowledge acquisition of a family member. This may be because the family member has deemed the knowledge to be irrelevant to them.

From an ideological standpoint Berger and Luckmann's (1966) discussion of the social distribution of knowledge and relevance structures can be read as a defence of differentiated expertise in modern societies. Knowledge as they describe it as unevenly distributed but its distribution is rarely framed as a problem of social injustice and more as a functional feature of a complex society. This does not sit with the contemporary debates around HE where access to a specific semantic field (law medicine STEM etc.) is bound up with classed patterns of HE participation and with a state that seems to prioritise the human capital agenda over broader democratic or emancipatory aims of HE (Walsh & Loxley, 2015; Harford and Fleming, 2021). When Berger and Luckmann (1966) stress the everyday taken for granted knowledge and overlooking the historical and economic forces that shape it, they risk making inequality in HE seem normal. This leaves FGS appearing potentially responsible for fitting into an existing system rather than questioning its unequal access.

The next section will examine society as objective reality and more specifically institutionalization and legitimation.

5.4. Society as Objective Reality

5.4.1 Institutionalization

Institutionalization was a key aspect in understanding how societal structures and norms are created and maintained over time. The process of institutionalization involves engaging with another person's typifications, which results in recipes. These recipes then guide our behaviour and once they are habituated become routines in an individual's stock of knowledge, this gives rise to the process of institutionalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 54). Habitualised action (going to lectures every day) becomes cast in a pattern which can be repeated in the future and become part of the routine or norms in an individual's general stock of knowledge. "Institutionalization occurs whenever there was a reciprocal typifications of habitualised actions by types of actors" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 54). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue institutions like the family, education and economy are experienced by individuals as objective realities and that individual biographies are an episode within them. This institutional world was produced by humans, therefore the relationship between individuals and the social world is a dialectical one (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). There are three moments in the dialectical process 1) Externalization, 2) objectivation and 3) internalization. Externalization maps on to "society as a human product" whereas objectivation maps on to "society as an objective reality" and internalization maps on to "man (including women are) a social product" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.61). Externalization is the process by which humans express themselves creatively in the world. In everyday life externalization occurs when a person shares their ideas or emotions for examples through a conversation in the home or in HE with fellow students. The objectivated meaning of the activity within institutions was knowledge and the transmission of institutions was the transmission of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This point was also acknowledged within the White Paper (DES, 1995) when it acknowledged the intergenerational effect that education can have. According to Knoblauch and Wilke's (2016) interpretation of Berger and Luckmann's (1966), work language was considered the most important kind of objectivation. Objectivation in daily life was evident in the creation of social norms or laws, they began as ideas but they became accepted in sections of society. An example from HE could be when theoretical concepts become widely accepted and embedded within discipline knowledge. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained that the social world was reproduced from generation to generation through the process of socialisation and internalized as subjective reality, which shaped individuals. Berger and Luckmann (1966)

discussed the link between knowledge and identity; how the objective truth through the process of socialisation becomes internalized, shapes individuals and their identities.

Sedimentation

In order for a human being at an individual level to make sense of their biography and their place in the social world, the experiences which are retained (noting that not all experiences are retained) become sedimented and take on the status of a memorable entity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). To move to the collective experiences, when a group of individuals share a common history, these experiences become “incorporated into a common stock of knowledge” (p. 67) collectively acknowledged. This common stock of knowledge is very powerful as it has intergenerational effects because language becomes the instrument through which the ‘stock’ was constituted, mediated and transferred.

This could be understood in the context of this research for example, FGS do not necessarily have the common stock of knowledge in the beginning of their HE experience but due to the dyadic pair’s engagement in HE they add to the family’s common stock of knowledge leading to intergenerational effects. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) it is only when language becomes sedimented into the shared experiences, will the experiences be transmitted to the next generation.

This transmission can happen through a sign system and the one referred to by Berger and Luckmann was linguistic because it is “the instrument of the collective stock of knowledge” (p. 68). If language is the mechanism by which the collective stock of knowledge is transmitted, then this reinforces the role of language in society. If an experience was shared by numerous individuals it may become sedimented and may lead to ‘a bond’ forming between the individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The connection between the parent and child in HE, their shared experience could have ‘bonded’ them together and potentially the whole family. People who are not actively engaged in an experience (Non-HE family members) it may be relevant to them in a ‘derived manner’ it has become part of the common stock of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This could be directly related to the effects of the HE experience on other family members as an example, those who are not directly engaged in the HE experience, but may experience its effects in a ‘derived manner’. ‘Monothetic acquisition’ is a Husserlian term which explains that as individuals we do not necessarily need to be involved in the creation of sedimented knowledge to understand it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In knowledge transfer or transmission it was essential that there was a ‘social apparatus’ in order for this transmission of knowledge to occur. The

transmission of knowledge happens between transmitter and recipients of knowledge. An example of this could be in HE the lecturer and the student in a formalized sense. By knowledge Berger and Luckmann defined it as “objectivated meanings of institutional activity” (p. 70). This could be the knowledge held by hunters about how to hunt, while also noting that some knowledge was relevant to everyone and some only relevant to a small number of people. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained a process relating to the reaffirmation of knowledge through ‘symbolic objects’ (p. 71). This could be an example of how the ‘symbolic objects’ within the education context (the picture of the student in their cap, and gown, the parchment at conferral ceremonies, the gold star) stand for and symbolize knowledge. For many students these objects serves as a symbolic confirmation of their knowledge and the student role they have played for the previous number of year(s).

Roles

One way by which order in society was constructed lies in the performances of roles and their typifications. People for example have the role of mother in society and there are certain typifications associated with that role which society expects and these vary from culture to culture. This means that we share and have interlocking performances with others as action becomes typified. There was specific vocabulary associated with the typifications of forms of action, which leads to the necessity for linguistic objectifications. Berger and Luckman (1966) suggest that actions are not solely tied to individual experiences but also have shared and recognizable meanings within a specific cultural or societal context as people have roles which other people understand. This highlights the collective nature of the interpretation of human behaviour and actions.

Roles are actions which are repeated; they are a performance (as well as performative) and become a role when the actions become objectified and any person can take the role on if it was appropriate. Institutionalized behaviour involves people playing roles because roles stand for the institutional order (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It was necessary in relation to roles that typologies of roles (e.g. student or lecturer; child or parent) are necessary because institutions are embodied in an individual’s experience of roles. One way by which an individual engages with the social world is through playing roles, and internalizing them in order for the social world to become real in the subjective sense to the individual (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Goffman’s (1959) work explains how an individual navigates between the front stage and backstage realities in his dramaturgical analysis or when he compares roles to a mask we put on and the means by which we know each other and that we know ourselves.

This points to some similarities in approach by both Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Goffman (1959).

Social roles are fundamentally relational and defined in respect of each other. For instance a lecturer and a student, although acting out different roles individually, their meaning i.e. what it was to be a student, is tied to what it means to be a lecturer. Both act as representatives for the institution of HE and it is only in the performance of these roles that the institutions connect to experience. Roles make it possible for institutions to exist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) one cannot underestimate the function of roles and the role of language in institutions. This is because institutionalized order can only be realized in roles and roles represent an institution; the role of mother or father represents the institution of the family.

The relationship between knowledge and its origins is a dialectical one because knowledge is a social product and it is also a factor in social change. There exists in society 'socially segregated sub-universes of meaning' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) which come about due to the division of labour or the differentiation of roles people play in society as part of their working life.

As an example, these sub-universes of meaning are socially structured; an example of one could be a role associated with a job, as a nurse as an example. The sub-universes (Hospital and medicine) have the ability to determine who was an insider and who was an outsider which is linked to the role they play within the sub-universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Elias & Scotson, 1994). "An entire legitimating machinery is at work so that laymen will remain laymen and doctors and that both will do so happily" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 88). Society has a way of keeping people in their place because not everyone has access to the sub-universe and its associated knowledge.

5.4.2 Legitimation and Symbolic Universes

For Berger and Luckmann (1966) the legitimation of institutions involved values and knowledge occurred when the 'institutional order' was required to be passed down to the next generation, it guided people to do certain things. The knowledge involved was the knowledge about roles and the knowledge gained from explanations of the historical traditions associated with a role as an example.

There are four levels of legitimation. The first level, "incipient legitimation is present as soon as a system of linguistic objectifications of human experience is transmitted" (p. 94). An

example as explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966) was vocabulary which then legitimates the structure, or when a parent says 'this is how things are done around here' and when a child asks 'why', sometimes the adult does not go into the details of the why because they themselves cannot put it into words, 'it just is'; this would be an example of self-evident knowledge. The second level of legitimation is, for example, proverbs, wise sayings, or stories told. The third level of legitimation entails specific theories which govern institutional order and when there was a differentiated body of knowledge. This could be where scientific or sociological or psychological theory may emerge beyond the people who were part of its construction and the knowledge takes on a life of its own. The fourth level of legitimations was the symbolic universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) the symbolic universe was a frame of reference, and what takes place within it, is all human experience which also included the biography of individuals, dreams, provinces of meaning and fantasies, it was "where the whole world is created" (p. 96). Symbolic universes have a history and are created by individuals as individuals create social products, it is where realities collide, the marginal and the paramount reality of everyday life, where limits are placed on relevant interactions, people are assigned to a rank in the symbolic universe because according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) it "puts everything in the right place" (p. 98).

The symbolic universe gives order and legitimates roles; it was a cognitive construction of how to be in the world, within a general frame of reference. In relation to identity it was legitimated by placing it within the symbolic universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), who you are as a person was due to the socialization process you went through which is dependent upon who you have had relations with. There are tensions which exist in the process of institutionalization and therefore, there is no society that is in perfect harmony. Yet the emphasis remains on how symbolic universes are repaired and maintained with less attention to how subordinated groups might radically rework or reject the dominant universe that has been handed down to them. This was because as discussed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) "all social phenomena are constructions produced historically through human activity, no society is totally taken for granted and so a fortiori is no symbolic universe" (p. 106). The problematic nature of the symbolic universe was located in the socialization process because socialization was never 100% successful because of the role of the deviant. Socialization always involves another individual or set of individuals, dialectically; you cannot be socialised in isolation. There was the possibility of a deviant version of the symbolic universe, where a group carries a different definition of reality. This group then put the symbolic universe 'under threat' both theoretically and practically (Berger & Luckmann,

1966). When FGS engage in HE it could be interpreted that they are placing the symbolic universe 'under threat' for their families as they re-define their HE realities. Previously education may not have been valued in the family and now due to their participation in HE it is, sometimes getting an education could be perceived as a threat to the symbolic universe for individuals where HE is not the norm. Human beings cause the changes in the symbolic universe over time and the definition of reality continually resides with individuals, because they define reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) note that it was important to understand the context in which knowledge was derived according to whom (Gender, Social Class, and Power). It is important to reflect on this because the human capital debate continues to dominate in HE (Walsh & Loxley, 2015, Walsh, 2009; Harford & Fleming 2021).

At the same time the symbolic universes that Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe are implicitly those of western liberal capitalist societies where the family, state and religion are seen as relatively stable constructs. In the Irish context the historic entanglement of the Catholic Church the state and the education system and the legacy of poverty, war, migration and institutional abuse complicates any simple story of universe maintenance. Their theory offers little guidance on how the universes themselves are shaped by wider political, economic projects like the OECD human capital agenda (Walsh & Loxley, 2015).

Habitualisation and institutionalization in themselves do limit the flexibility of human action and institutions tend to persist unless they become problematic. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) used the term 'experts' to explain how people gained specialized bodies of knowledge. These experts whom Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to are 'universal experts' and they operate on a theoretical level. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explored power, and this was evident in this example as they discussed how powerful elites can impress their definitions of reality on society at large. They use the example of how the Brahmins operated in Indian society and were considered social engineers. Conflict emerged between the Brahmins and the military caste and this gave rise to a redefinition of reality which produced a new group of experts. "Power in society includes the power to determine decisive socialization processes and therefore the power to produce reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 119).

This could also be an example of the power the Catholic Church had on the education system and therefore on the socialisation process of the individuals who attended their institutions (Inglis, 1998).

Due to the central role the family plays in the socialisation process it also illuminates the power the family as a social institution has in society. Power resides within the socialisation process; power of society lies in its ability or not to impose its definitions of reality on the

population. HE policy is an example of this also and as previously discussed in Chapter 2. There were many examples of how the OECD or the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education Research Innovation and Science seek to define education. The policy and department officials have the power to define who is in a disadvantaged category and who is able to apply for a certain grant; who gets accommodations, who is targeted in policy documents, under access or widening participation agendas or the domination of the human capital debate, which means funding is directed at certain disciplines like the STEM subjects because that is where the multinational organisations have jobs for graduates. Berger and Luckmann (1966) elucidated that intellectuals in society may occupy a sub-society which accepts their definitions of reality, a place where the intellectual feels 'at home', a place where "there are others who regard his deviant definitions as reality also" (p. 126) a revolutionary intellectual could serve as a good example here. This then gives rise to the insiders and the outsiders due to knowledge acquisition and status but "the outsider is avoided because he always embodies the threat of nihilation" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 126) of reality.

There was a potential within the proposal by Berger and Luckmann (1966) of sub- societies and to examine the possibility of the families in this study creating sub-societies? Maybe even counter societies, which serve to challenge the norms around HE participation in their extended families and communities because HE was not the norm. The next section will examine society as a subjective reality and examine the components of their explanation of internalization of reality and internalization and the social structure.

5.5 Society as Subjective reality

5.5.1 Internalization of Reality

There are three moments in the dialectical process as previously discussed, 1) externalization, 2) objectivation and 3) internalization and they are intertwined with the socialization process.

Fundamentally "internalization is the process whereby new members of a collectivity are socialized into the objectified patterns of institutionalization and legitimation" (Lafferty, 1977, p. 142).

Primary Socialisation

Human beings are not born active participating members of society, they become members of society through the process of socialization. Society exists as both an objective and subjective reality which involves a dialectical process composed of the three moments of externalization, objectivation and internalization.

It is through externalization that society is a human product. It is through objectification that society becomes a reality sui generis. It is through internalization that man is a product of society (Berger, 1990, p. 4).

Grundmann (2019) would suggest that socialisation was in fact a co-creation “the term of interactivity denotes a central mode of socialization as a co-construction” (p. 93). Internalization was the process by which an individual learns about other individuals and also “the world as meaningful” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 130). In the beginning of this process the individual dominates, by this Berger and Luckmann (1966) meant that it was the process by which an individual understands other individuals and their subjective processes. It was the process by which the “world becomes his own” (p. 130). When individuals realise ‘this is my world and I am part of it and it is mine’ then the individual moves to we “not only understand each other definitions of shared situations”, they define them reciprocally (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 130). This joint process means that there was a mutual identification and understanding, where both individuals engage with each other’s worlds during socialisation. It was only when this level of internalization happens a person was considered a member of society.

Socialisation was defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as “the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society” (p. 130). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, The White Paper (1995) and the Green Paper (1998) on Adult Education, pointed to the socialisation process between generations and how knowledge beliefs and values are passed to the next generation. Individuals are socialised into society through primary and secondary socialization, into this dance between the objective and subjective realities. It was important to note that primary socialization according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) was the most important stage and that it forms the foundation for all secondary socialization and both processes must align.

Through the primary socialization process it was the role of ‘significant others’ to socialise the child into their reality. The individual has no choice in relation to the significant others, their parent, parents, siblings or carers are their significant others.

It was the significant other's definitions of reality which were presented to the child as an objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The significant others acted as filters and mediated the world to the child. This filtering process meant that they filter the social world to the individual depending on their social class, view of education or soccer team affiliation, and their position in society. The individual was socialised into a social class by their significant others, they contended that "there is good reason to believe that without such emotional attachment to the significant others the learning process would be difficult" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 131). Berger and Luckmann (1966) justified this by explaining that the socialisation process and the role that the significant others play was a dialectical process at its core. They also explained that they were influenced by the Meadian theory of socialisation and that the "self is a reflected entity" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 132). Concurrently they explained that they do not accept the psychological theoretical approaches which informed their argument. Fleming (2018) would also concur with this and would add recognition into the frame, if recognition was "given and received" in the family, if the significant other was attuned to the child's needs then the child will "grow and develop" (p.6). In order for socialisation to occur the child needs to be able to identify with the significant others, only then will internalization occur. "The lower class child not only absorbs lower class perspective on the social world he absorbs it in the idiosyncratic coloration given it by his parents" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 131). This process was further differentiated from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) perspective because the "child will not only come to inhabit a world greatly different from that of an upper-class child, but may do so in a manner quite different from the lower class child next door" (p. 131). This may seem overly deterministic by Berger and Luckmann (1966) because there will always be variations from family to family irrespective of their social class and through education, a child can acquire a new social class. Both families may occupy different social classes but even within the lower class family the child will have different relationships with their significant others and the emotional availability of the parents may also vary.

Through the socialisation process the child internalizes the norms and attitudes and values of their parents and they become part of the child. The child's self is a mirror of how the child had been socialized, how the child had been treated by their parents in their socialisation process becomes their sense of self, "the self is a reflected entity" it was not a one way process in that "it entails a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 132). There was a parallel process at play identified by Berger and Luckmann (1966) where the child took on the roles and attitudes of the other and at the same

time acquired their world. He (or she) knows who he (or she) is, as (s)he internalizes the social world which was mediated by his/her parents.

Through primary socialization the child learns the difference between 'that's the way we do things around here', to 'that's the way things are in society', "this abstraction from the roles and attitudes of concrete significant others is called the generalized other" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 133). When there was an understanding for the child of the generalized identification of how society was, or understood an action, then the child's self-identification firms and ensures stability.

When the process of crystallization occurs and "society identity and reality are subjectively crystallized in the same process of internalization....crystallization is concurrent with the internalization of language" (p. 133). This involves the process of language acquisition, through the process of internalization, then language becomes the most important instrument of socialisation. Language facilitates the transference between subjective and objective understandings of reality. As previously stated a child has no choice in its parents and the parents 'set the rules of the game' for the child:

The child does not internalize the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalizes it as *the* world, the only existent and only conceivable world, the world tout court (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 134).

This was why primary socialization was more important than secondary socialization because it was firmly entrenched in consciousness (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Language schemes are internalized so therefore language becomes pivotal in the transference of 'the way we do things around here' and why you need to be a certain way, language becomes a vital mechanism in explaining action. The language schemes are a way of positioning the child within society and giving them "institutionalized programs for everyday life" (p. 135). One of the crucial roles of primary socialization was to transmit the stock of knowledge. When a child has come to terms with the generalized other, he/she has a self and a world, only then does primary socialization end and secondary socialization begin. If the individual has gone through the process of primary socialization and has acquired their "base world", it was in secondary socialization where the sub-worlds are internalized.

Secondary socialization

Living in a society with a vast and complicated 'stock of knowledge' meant that due to the social distribution of knowledge and the role that the division of labour played in the social

distribution of knowledge, secondary socialization was imperative (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Secondary socialization was the process by which the individual internalized institutions (e.g. education) and their associated subworlds (e.g. various disciplines within education, medicine, social care, law etc.), the process by which individuals attained roles and role specific knowledge as those embedded within the division of labour in society. Berger and Luckmann (1966) made a distinction between general relevant knowledge and special knowledge. Special Knowledge arose due to the division of labour (who does what job/role and the associated domain knowledge) and involved role specific vocabularies, the internalization of semantic fields, and how they structured the everyday interpretations and actions of individuals within specific institutions. Differentiated language was associated with the division of labour which determined an individual's role in society.

This role specific language is internalized *in toto* by the individual as (s)he is trained"...(S)he becomes a..... not only by acquiring the requisite skills but by becoming capable of understanding and using this language" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966. p. 139).

There was a comparison here which could be made as FGS enter HE at a distinct disadvantage considering that they may not have the linguistic capital to engage to the same extent initially, as their second and third generation counterparts. When an individual gains an understanding of the language pertinent to their role, they utilize it and communicate with other individuals in the same sub-world, because language facilitates the understanding of the norms associated with roles. Also associated with this internalization process according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) was that of roles and associated norms which may include "a variety of representative ceremonies and physical objects" (p. 139) because these ceremonies served to legitimate the role and associated norms. How a society viewed a role determined the "status of the body of knowledge concerned within the symbolic universe as a whole" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 139).

There was a fundamental problem with secondary socialization in that it was dependent upon primary socialization because the self was formed and the world was already internalized. The other important point made by Berger and Luckmann (1966) was that the "already internalized reality (that of primary socialisation) has a tendency to persist" (p. 140). This persistence created a problem because when the individual encounters something new this has to be superimposed onto the pre-existing reality attained through the process of primary

socialization. Therefore, different bodies of knowledge need to be integrated in order to establish and maintain the consistency between primary and secondary socialization. Learning sequences become less dependent on biology and more in terms of foundational structure 'in order to do this ...one must have done that'.

For example, one must meet certain criteria in order to go to university, these exist in order to "enhance the prestige of the roles in question" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 141) being a student as an example or the requirement of a job to have a degree. It also posed problems when the reality of an individual was challenged later in life through secondary socialization because then the individual's subjective reality was being challenged to transform.

Crises of secondary socialization

During secondary socialisation a child realises that the world in which their significant others represented was not the only one (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This presents a 'crisis' because the child realises that the 'taken for granted' nature of the reality they occupied involves seeing things in a different light, an example would be gaining an insight into one's social class. For example, the child sees the teacher as representing the social institution of education and the position of the middle classes (not always the case) and this relationship was a formalized one, it was based on the role of the teacher which was predicated on anonymity. The teachers are apprehended as 'institutional functionaries', their role was to transmit knowledge. The reality internalized in primary socialization "takes severe biographical shocks to disintegrate" while the internalized reality acquired during secondary socialization is much easier to dismantle (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 142).

During the process of secondary socialization there was a total self (the entirety of an individual's personality their thoughts feelings experiences and roles) and the role specific partial self, the individual attains the ability to detach a part of the self, depending on the role they occupy. If an individual had completed primary socialisation, they are therefore able to create distance between the two selves. The ability to create distance between the two selves can occur only after primary socialization. An example of this would be a child's ability to leave school work behind as soon as they exit that reality and the role specific situation of being a student and engage in the role of being son or daughter at home.

The Home and Socialization

Berger and Luckmann (1966) discussed the home and its role in the socialisation process. They explained that knowledge in secondary socialization must be reinforced through pedagogic techniques and insights into the home environment and employed by the teacher (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and the home plays a central role in this process.

The original reality of childhood is “Home”... By comparison with it all later realities are artificial. Thus the school teacher tries to “bring home” the contents (s)he is imparting by making them vivid (that is making them seem as alive as the ‘home world’ of the child), relevant (that is linking them to the relevance structures already present in the “home world”) and interesting . These manoeuvres are necessary because an internalized reality if already there, persistently “in the way” of new internalizations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 143).

The role and importance of the home being the locus of all further knowledge acquisition in education cannot be underestimated and is worth further consideration. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained that in more simple societies of the past the family heavily influenced both primary and secondary socialization but this has changed as society has become more differentiated. The modern education system was an example where specialized agencies have taken on the role of secondary socialization, which inadvertently has led to a decline in the influence of the family in secondary socialization (Kennedy, 2001).

Maintenance and Transformation of subjective reality

Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained that every society has developed ways of maintaining the alignment between subjective and objective reality because it must protect the subjective reality from threats and maintain it. They also suggest that human beings face threats from marginal situations of experience, which present competing definitions of reality. If one were to ask the question, how is the reality of everyday life maintained? The answer according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) would be through the routines of everyday life, which give rise to institutionalization and it is constantly reaffirmed by the interactions between individuals. An individual’s subjective reality is maintained by the encounters they have with other individuals in their daily lived experience; this holds true for encounters with significant others and less important others (Berger and Luckman refer to people who are not ‘significant others’ as less important others). It was ‘significant others’ who played the central position in both reality maintenance and identity; less significant others operated in the background of this process, like a chorus. It was clear from Berger and Luckmann’s (1966)

work that individuals look to significant others and the family more often for identity confirmation. This confirmation and also maintenance of reality was both explicit and emotionally charged due to the role significant others play in the primary socialization process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Just as the family can confirm one's subjective reality it can also be involved in a process of disconfirmation of one's subjective reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained that a reality disconfirming act taken by a family member has far greater gravity, than an act taken by a less significant other. The attendance in HE by a family member could be interpreted as more significant than a less significant other. Knowledge held by significant others holds more weight than information held and transmitted by less significant others. This point by Berger and Luckmann (1966) reinforced the role that the primary group relationship had in the process of secondary socialization, the family (or primary carers) was the safe harbour one was anchored to and served the purpose of reaffirming reality. This idea by Berger and Luckmann (1966) was important to consider in light of this research because the dyadic pair came back home, they resided there, shared their experiences, had conversations with the family and this anchoring effect must be considered in light of the research findings.

Conversation and reality maintenance

"The most important vehicle of reality maintenance is conversation" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 152) because it is through these the everyday interactions which maintain the subjective reality of individuals. The issue of 'casualness of conversation' was stressed because it was casual that it was referring to the routines in a taken for granted world. If the conversation loses the casualness, this indicates a break in routines and poses a threat to the taken for granted nature of the social world. Once a conversation occurs about something it adds a concreteness of experience and it gives it a secure place in the world. This was important to consider in relation to the familial context, the face to face encounters and conversations in the home.

Language facilitated conversations and in another way Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained "language realizes a world in the double sense of apprehending and producing it" (p. 153). Reality maintenance involves language, because when you use language you are objectifying your biographical experience. Those who have the same common language as others are in fact maintaining their reality, by using words they all understand, to speaking with the same accent.

There are corresponding "returns to reality" for the individual who goes back to the few individuals who understand his in-group allusions, to the section to which his accent belongs (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 154).

If an individual returns to the place where their accent originated, this can mean they engaged in a 'return to reality', or to the primary socialisation space. If a person engaging in HE returns to the family consistently in order to maintain subjective reality and the conversations are continual and consistent, then they will not pose a disruption or be viewed as a threat. On the other hand if the 'conversational apparatus' was not consistent then according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) this posed a threat to the subjective reality of said person. HE could potentially be conceived as disruption and or threat, as the students accrue a new conversational apparatus, which signifies to the family and others that change is occurring, potentially a crisis.

Crises and Alternations

Crisis situations or crises in reality can occur for both individuals or as a collective as they face a "challenge to the socially defined reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 156).

Crises are those which are perceived to be a threat to reality and the clash of realities is between people and within people, potentially within the student. When presented with an alternative reality and this alternative reality becomes frequently encountered the defensive resistance to the new reality loses its crisis character and moves into the space of routinization. Most of the discussion by Berger and Luckmann (1966) indicated that the subjective reality of an individual can be transformed. In extreme examples of this modification process when a 'total transformation' occurred, this would be where an individual 'switches worlds' these are referred to as total alternations. An example would be religious conversion and this form of alternation would require a process of re-socialization.

Critics have observed that in Berger and Luckmann's discussion of crises and alternations the emphasis falls more on how threatened symbolic universes are repaired than on how they might be transformed. Zander (2024) for example argues that the 'man on the street' in their analysis appears as a passive recipient of knowledge with limited capacity to interrogate or resist the dominant definitions of reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) do acknowledge deviant sub-universes and the possibility of total alternation, they devote much less attention to everyday forms of resistance and negotiation where marginalised individuals like people with disabilities can contest imposed identities (Zander, 2024).

Extreme alternation involved a process whereby the subjective reality of an individual must be dismantled and a new plausibility structure imparted on individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In order for this to occur there must be a dependency created between the individual and the person in a position of power (Religious leader), so that they then effectively identify with them "the individual must be emotionally dependent on these (now) significant others.

These significant others are the guides into the new reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 157).

When the alternating individual removes himself/herself from the world they previously occupied then they are not ‘yoked together with unbelievers’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Due to this removal from the previously inhabited world (the world where religion did not dominate), the individual was therefore protected from its destabilizing influence on their reality. As soon as the new reality becomes the norm for the individual, the individual having been segregated from ‘outsiders’ who were significant in their life, are still perceived as a potential threat to their new reality and this may include temptation to return to their old subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Examples of this could be drug addicts who are in rehabilitation or people who are members of cults. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) in order for alternation to be successful it involves “a reorganization of the conversational apparatus” (p. 159) and when people converse with their new ‘significant others’ they are engaged in a subjective reality transformation. To keep the outsiders out, the individual must be careful with whom they are associating with or else this could lead to “backsliding” where an individual begins to go back to their previous subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966 p. 159). The individual must engage in an interpretative process of reinterpreting their past lives “prealternation biography is typically nihilated in toto by subsuming it under a negative category occupying a strategic position in the new legitimizing apparatus” an example Berger and Luckmann employ here is social class “when I was still caught in bourgeois consciousness” (1966, p. 160). This involved a re-engagement with the meaning of previous life events and perceiving them as negative. What has been discussed above was total transformations which as stated earlier were extreme.

In Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) theory there can be partial transformations of subjective reality and these are common in society and can be connected to social mobility.

The example Berger and Luckmann (1966) utilised was a person from lower social class who had become a doctor, they explained that they must internalize the new reality but this experience will fall short of re-socialisation because they would build on primary internalizations and seek consistency with their subjective biography, so this was an example of secondary socialisation. The doctors faced a problem in the maintenance of continuity between their present and past subjective realities so it was not without difficulties. Instead of totally reinterpreting the past, this partial transformation involved a correlation of the past with the present, consistent with Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) explanation of secondary socialisation. In this case the individual may still connect with people from the past who were significant. For many upwardly mobile individuals in society, Berger and Luckmann (1966)

explained that there are already “interpretive schemes” which explain this mobility and “guarantee biographical continuity and smooth inconsistencies as they arise (p. 162). Individuals and their families were prepared.

The parents of such an upwardly mobile individual will accept certain changes in the latter’s demeanour and attitudes as a necessary possibly even desirable, accompaniment of his new station in life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 162)

The individual had been prepared for this upward mobility in advance of the mobility itself (London 1989), this was to prepare the subjective reality for the new social class they would occupy. The significant others prepared the child for upward mobility, this then meant that there would be a consistency when they became upwardly mobile and would not perceive it as a disruption to their subjective reality (Hoggart, 1957).

In secondary socialization the present is interpreted so as to stand in a continuous relationship with the past with a tendency to minimize such transformations as have actually taken place (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 163).

The above quote clearly sets apart the differences between re-socialization and secondary socialization.

5.5.2 Internalization and Social Structure

When Berger and Luckmann (1966) discussed successful socialization they were in fact referring to the symmetry between a person’s objective and subjective reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) looked to the past and asserted that it was much easier for simple societies historically to achieve maximal success in socialization because there was a low division of labour and there was only a small distribution of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lenski et al., 1995).

Life, so they argued, was the same for most people and their identity was set, to a certain degree as ‘they were who they were meant to be’, there were less options or opportunities in the past, compared to the present.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) posed the question of who am I? They suggested that there were two answers to this question, one provided by significant others or those in their community and the other one attributed to them by society depending on what role they

occupied or job they undertook. If these realities and the definitions of reality do not match up to some degree a rupture can occur:

In other words a cleavage appears between “appearance and reality in the individual’s self-apprehension (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 167).

Comparisons could be drawn or linked to Bourdieu’s (1999) concept of *habitus clevè* and applied to the process by which an individual’s identity goes through a transition due to HE participation. This attendance has an impact on the wider family’s reality also “When this cleavage becomes known to the community it is difficult to see that the community’s reality too will not be affected by this change” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 167). This was an example of the process where a change in a person’s self-apprehension had a direct effect on the community or family.

There were individuals in society as noted by Berger and Luckmann (1966) who have ‘hidden selves’ one that occurs when an individual had a choice between discrepant realities and also identities. Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested that if during secondary socialisation an alternative world was created, the individual may use the alternative world to manipulate. They refer to this as ‘cool alternation’ where the individual uses the new reality for their own gain in certain situations. While the individual does internalize their new reality they can dip in and out of it depending on when they need to. This would involve an individual engaging in the performance of a role “detach oneself in one’s own consciousness and which one may “act out” with manipulative control” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 173). When an individual due to their ability to be able to manipulate their environment and the perceived expectations of them in that environment, would take on and act out certain roles in certain situations. Through their interactions with the individuals in the given context, this is where they use their agency to employ roles for specific outcomes or dependent on a certain situation. This would potentially involve a manipulation of language and accent in order to fully take on the role and perform it. This point about ‘cool alternations’ is linked with the previous section under institutionalization and roles 5.4.1 but it is discussed here because of its importance in relation to the internalization process. The next section will navigate through some key critical reflections about the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and conclude this chapter.

5.6. Critical reflections and methodological implications

Once a theoretical perspective ventures into the space of a generalized or grand theory of society and skips into the chasm of the structure-agency debate, they open themselves up to

criticisms. If a theory does not explicitly explore power, gender or conflict it is determined to have ignored them. Berger and Luckmann (1966) have been subjected to criticism and discussion (Bourdieu, 1991; Inglis, 2012; Boss et al., 1993; Ristic, 2019; Dreher, 2019; Swidler & Arditi, 1994). Sociological theory is best understood sometimes through the lens of its critics, this section will focus firstly on why I did not employ Bourdieu as the theoretical frame and then move on to various criticisms of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work, namely the lack of discussion on power; gender and their overemphasis on childhood.

The overarching rationale for the choice of Berger and Luckmann over Bourdieu, was that in essence Bourdieu's theory "emphasises the restriction of structures imposed on human action" (Jovanovic, 2021, p. 533), or that we are governed by the objective structures. This understanding gave rise to a move towards the choice of Berger and Luckmann because I considered Bourdieu's theory too deterministic because of how the field structures relationships within the field. Bhaskar (1989) accused Berger and Luckmann of determinism because they offer a "voluntaristic idealism with respect to our understanding of social structure and on the other, a mechanistic determinism with respect to our understanding of people" (p.33). Vandenberghe (2018) discounted this and believed that the problem lay in the process by which Berger and Luckmann (1966) reduced structure to culture, culture to symbols and signs, and reduced social order to social control (p. 413-414). Berger and Luckmann (1966) employed relational theorizing, focused on the socialization process and they acknowledged that individuals are never fully socialised, they leave space for change and flexibility (Jovanovic, 2021) because in essence they see the world as "chaotic and precarious" (Abercrombie, 1986, p. 19). As stated previously employing Berger and Luckmann (1966) was in essence to go where others had not gone previously, theoretically speaking, as much of the literature employed Bourdieu, which was of value, but the aim was to venture into uncharted territory by employing their work for HE research on the family.

In examining the notion of power in the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) some theorists suggested that because they focused on the micro social interactions that they were in some way ignoring the macro social forces or structures at play (Inglis, 2012; Boss et al., 1993); when this was not the case. This was down to a specific misinterpretation of their work.

A common kind of complaint from more structurally orientated social theorists the key absence in phenomenological perspectives are their alleged downgrading or complete ignoring of questions to do with social hierarchy and inequalities of power (Inglis, 2012, p. 105)

A criticism of phenomenology in general refers to its perceived limitation that it ignored the role of power in the development of social constructions. If one as Boss et al. (1993) proposed employ the work of Foucault (1980) this incorporation could correct this criticism. If you connect power to knowledge “we can easily think of knowledge as the meaningful adjunct of power. Knowledge is always implicated in power, just as power implicates knowledge” (Boss et al., 1993, p. 668; Ristic, 2019). One could argue that how an individual uses language and how they perceive and describe events was connected with their specific stock of knowledge there was no reason in principle why the idea of prevailing description cannot be seen as the study of power (Boss et al, 1993). Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) theory offers the possibility of the analysis of the “forgotten fields of power” through a focus on the “genesis and relationality of knowledge” (Dreher, 2019, p. 248). Due to the fact that power and knowledge are intertwined it was worth noting that power in fact “allows people to enact realities that make their knowledge plausible” (Swidler & Ardit, 1994, p. 322). Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasised the importance of individual power and agency and shifted the focus to the relational, they aimed to bring the individual back to the center of social theory. Even if one looks at the title of their book it was heavy on the side of agency as a powerful mechanism to shape society.

Bourdieu (1991) insinuated that Berger and Luckmann (1966) were ignorant to power. Bourdieu located this ignorance with their view of “the naturalisation of the familiar world” because it was ‘taken for granted’ so therefore he perceives that they have ignored power (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 276). Dreher (2019) proposed that power within Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) theory lies in the relationship between the “social construction of objectivated power relations and the subjective constitution of power structures” (p. 236) and it presents an opportunity for understanding how power was created in relation to “institutionalization legitimation and symbolic universe” (p. 236) and to potentially establish “a theory of power” (p.248). Dreher (2019) believed that fundamentally their theory offers the theoretical framework to “explain the power of and domination by elites propagating their symbolic universes” (p. 248). Dreher (2016) pointed to the theoretical strengths of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) explanation of the subjective dimension of power constitution, because it offered the potential to confront power hierarchies in society. The ‘dialectical relationship between objective and subjective reality’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), is itself in conflict or potentially the relationship between objective and subjective realities are in constant antagonism, one which is difficult to fully resolve and points to a power struggle.

Dreher (2016; 2019) has shown that the concepts of Berger and Luckmann (1966) like institutionalisation, legitimation and symbolic universes can if pushed, sustain a robust

analysis of how elites construct and maintain power. Hjelm (2019) however cautions that Berger's own political conservatism and scepticism towards critical sociology have shaped how social constructionism has been mobilised sometimes in ways which has resulted in downplaying structural inequalities. For this research the task is therefore not to simply apply Berger and Luckmann (1966) but to appropriate their concepts critically and reflexively embedding them within a broader historically and materially informed analysis of the family and HE.

When we look at the criticisms around power and analysis of social class hierarchies being absent in any great depth this is true. One example was when they discussed that knowledge was socially distributed. Social class was embedded to a certain degree within their theory and so was gender because knowledge is filtered by many things and its reproduction is dependent upon who is responsible for its reproduction. The focus initially was on the primary socialisation process, where the family not only socialises an individual into society but a specific gender and social class, which means it holds a lot of power. This was because "power in society includes the power to determine decisive socialisation processes and therefore the power to produce reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 119). This point was reaffirmed in this quote "The lower class child not only absorbs lower class perspective on the social world he absorbs it in the idiosyncratic coloration given it by his parents" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 131).

Another criticism by Sica (2016) was that they focused too much on childhood and the 'intergenerational transmission of cultural traits' in doing so they ignored the more macro dynamics of society, like politics or the economy (p. 48). When Berger and Luckmann (1966) discussed internalization they noted the following, which was important in light of the previous criticism "the micro-sociological or social-psychological analysis of phenomena of internalization must always have at its background a macro-sociological understanding of their structural aspects" (p. 163). This reference puts front and center Berger and Luckmann's (1966) understanding of the role of structure in the lives of individuals at a micro level. They have placed weight within their work on the socialisation process and at the heart of the socialisation process, parents and their children. Maybe their focus lay here because of the importance of the role of both power and the family in the socialisation process because of its ability to shape the members, it is a powerful institution. Potentially Berger and Luckmann, (1966) inadvertently identified and focused on the most powerful institution in society, the family. The family was affected by all other institutions and if we note within the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) the family maintains and transforms the subjective realities of

its members since the “significant others occupy a central position in the economy of reality maintenance” (p. 150). The family contains the significant others and through attachment (Fleming, 2016), assists in maintaining the individual’s reality. It must be noted though that attachment is not some kind of natural process and it is influenced by culture, history, society and the economy. Berger and Luckmann (1966) note the decline in the position of the family with regard to secondary socialisation but do make the reinforced point that the family was irrevocably linked and solely responsible for the primary socialisation of individuals.

Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) discussion on the taken for granted nature of everyday life was critiqued by Muzzetto (2015), he noted that “the phenomenon of taken-for-grantedness is not fully investigated” (p. 246) in their work and proposed that Berger and Luckmann, must confront “what precisely is taken for grantedness” what was included and what was excluded (p. 260) otherwise uncertainty will remain.

Beyond questions of power and childhood several authors have highlighted the cultural and ideological partiality of Berger and Luckman’s account (Shipley and Williams, 2019). Their ‘natural attitude’ in practice, in their work, is in practice the taken for granted world of a western, Christian, middle class life-world. Post-colonial and critical race theoretical perspectives have argued that having universal descriptions can risk the marginalisation of alternative ontologies for example indigenous communities, minority communities or those whose experience of modernity is shaped by a particular lens of dispossession, conquest and also racism. Vidal (2015) criticises the social constructivist perspective for not fully identifying the role of material conditions and how the capitalist relations of production can constrain agency. This raises important methodological considerations and caution when employing the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) to examine FGF accounts because we must also consider more macro structural dimensions like housing, precarious employment, welfare policy and even austerity which has an impact on what is negotiated in the home.

Methodological implications

It was important to note also that their theory had methodological implications for this research because they redirected sociological research in a number of ways. In particular they pushed it towards an understanding of how language assists in the objectification of social reality, which then encouraged approaches to examine the relationship between knowledge and the social construction of reality (Ristic, 2019) notably for the families in this research.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) contributed to qualitative methods which have been growing within “the interpretative paradigm” (Knoblauch & Wilke, 2016, p. 60; Eberle, 2019); for example visual methodology, auto-ethnography, online ethnography (Gergen, 2019) When Berger and Luckmann (1966) discussed ‘common sense knowledge’ and whatever passes for knowledge in society regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), they centered everyday knowledge and the everyday person which arguably led to “the democratization of the subject of this discipline”. In short, individuals in society have a pre-theoretical understanding of it, which is valuable and important (Jovanovic, 2021, p. 532; Vandenberghe, 2018). The methodological implications of employing the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) in this research will be examined further in the next Chapter 6 (6.3.3).

The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) attempted a lens to explore the intricate dynamics of families with a dyadic pair engaging in HE. Their work on externalization focused the examination in this research, to how family members expressed their educational experiences and knowledge within the family setting. This involved an examination of their ideas, values and language acquired in HE. Their concept of objectivation assisted in the analysis of how the individual family member’s interactions solidify possibly into new norms and roles. These could have the impact of changes in family dynamics which could be shaped by the influence of HE. Their use of the term internalizations offered an opportunity to explore two things. Firstly, how the dyadic pairs assimilated their knowledge and experience of HE. Secondly, to examine if the non-HE participants’ beliefs or aspirations were influenced by the dyadic pair’s HE experience. Finally their focus on the socialization process was crucial to examining how the potentially newly internalised norms and roles were part of the evolution of the family during the HE experience and if they had an impact potentially on the family interactions and the overall family dynamic.

By applying the concepts in Berger and Luckmann’s work the research delved into how HE impacts language in the home, alters perceptions of the world of family members and reshaped roles and relationships within the family. This theoretical approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the reciprocal influence between an individual’s educational experiences and their family background. It highlighted due to the employment of their theory, the complex interplay between personal development and familial dynamics.

Conclusion

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) provided only one theoretical perspective to facilitate answering tentatively the 'why' of this research; why and how HE permeates the family home and why it unsettles and reshapes roles, relationships and language when a dyadic pair engages in HE. The utilisation of their theory will give a greater understanding and provide a different framework for meaning and interpretation of the research findings. Their work also marked a shift towards the idea that social construction does not mean an interest in the processes that take place inside people's minds or beyond their reach - but 'between' people (Ristic, 2019, p. 81). This point was also reinforced by Grundmann (2019) "it is not the subject but the 'space between' the subjects that creates the human understanding of the world. This chapter also argued that their account of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation together with primary and secondary socialisation is particularly useful for making sense of FG families' experiences. Concepts such as the home as the original reality of childhood, the role of significant others, crises and alternations and the maintenance and transformation of subjective reality spoke directly to the dynamics of the dyadic pairs and their families. Berger and Luckmann (1966) provided an important lens for examining how HE related ideas values and language are expressed in the family setting and how these interactions may sediment into new norms roles and identities.

At the same time this chapter made clear that this framework is partial and situated. Their work rests on a western liberal largely Christian middle class lifeworld which is treated as if it were simply, the natural attitude (Shipley and Williams, 2019). Critics have shown that they do not fully interrogate what is taken for granted, Muzetto (2015) noting that the phenomenon of taken for grantedness is insufficiently examined and that they leave unclear what is included and what is excluded in everyday reality. Their treatment of the social distribution of knowledge tends to present inequality as a functional feature of complex societies rather than a matter of structural injustice, an issue that aligns with Vidal's (2015) critique of social constructivism for underplaying material and economic constraints. Furthermore while their strong focus on language is central to their theory, this emphasis leaves non-verbal embodied and affective aspects of family life in the background. This omission resonated with Bourdieu's (1991) wider critique of the limits of purely linguistic accounts of social practice. Their concepts are employed critically in Chapter 10 and the examination of many authors in the literature review Chapter many of which provide

supplemental theoretical lenses, in essence to present a more robust understanding of how HE is constructed, negotiated and sometimes contested within the family. Their emphasis on everyday life typifications, semantic fields the social stock of knowledge institutionalisation legitimation and symbolic universes provided a vocabulary to think about how HE becomes woven into the routines conversations and practices of family life. This latter discussion in Chapter 10 keeps firmly in view the ideological roots and the blind spots of their theory.

The next Chapter (Chapter 6) turns to the methodological implications of this positioning, outlining how the research design sought to reconstruct participants' lifeworld, while remaining attentive to the unequal conditions under which different realities can be voiced, heard and legitimated.

CHAPTER 6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 examined the theoretical framework to situate and assist in interpretation of the research findings. As a continuation, in this chapter I will critically discuss the philosophical, theoretical, methodological foundations, and methods employed, to explore the social phenomenon of intergenerational familial participation in HE. An explanation of the research process Stages 1-4 and a justification for the methods employed are provided to ensure an appropriate methodological connection between the methods and the research question. The process of establishing trust in the research encompassed many considerations. The final section, reflexivity, power and ethical considerations, provided a reflexive space to stand back and consider the research from a personal and participant perspective. The overarching research question posed was:

What are the experiences of first-generation families with an intergenerational dyadic pair engaging in HE?

It was essential to ensure that the methods employed were appropriate to facilitate exploring the research questions, to make an original contribution to knowledge. This research was conducted in a transparent and rigorous way and this chapter documents the research process and decisions made throughout. Rigour will be demonstrated by clearly explaining the methodology and methods because even though it was a qualitative piece of research, it was essential to reflect on the multiple ways of establishing reliability (Golafshani, 2003).

In summary this research was a multiple case study design guided by the work of Yin (2014). Establishing boundaries and context around the phenomenon was necessary to explain how the research question would successfully examine where "little was known", families engaging in higher education (Gofen, 2009, p. 105). The next section 6.2 will examine the research objectives and questions.

6.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Initially, there were ten research questions, which were grouped into two sets of questions, five questions were collectively focused on the family(See Table 1 and findings from these research questions presented in Chapter 8 and 9) and five questions which were individually focused on the student (See table 2 and findings from these questions are presented in Chapter 7).

While all questions were examined with the participants, the research focused on the collectively orientated questions. Both sets of questions are set out in the tables below:

Collectively orientated Research questions (Collective)	Main research questions focusing on the <u>collective</u> nature of the HE experience.	Findings for set 1 research questions were the main focus of the research findings Chapters 8 and 9
Question 1:	How does the participation in HE of two family members impact on relationships within the family unit?	The findings from this question which has several sub questions were discussed under section 8.2, the data from these questions is be explored in Discussion Chapter 10 Section 10.3.1 Mycorrhizal Network Activates and Section 10.4 Disruption to the reality of everyday family life and 10.5 Collective transformations.
Question 2:	How does the participation of two family members in HE affect the family and the roles within the family?	The findings from this question which has several sub questions are discussed under 8.3 and 9.4 of the findings. The data from these questions will be explored in Discussion Chapter 10 section 10.3 Mycorrhizal Network Activates, 10.4 Disruption to the everyday reality of the family home; 10.5 Collective Transformations.
Question 3:	How does educational socialisation within the family between family members take place? What are the family's educational values?	The findings from this question which has several sub questions, were discussed under Sections 9.2; 9.4 the data from these questions will be explored in Discussion Chapter 10 Section 10.2; Specifically 10.2.2.

Question 4:	Does HE come into the family home? Explore possible Liquid HE effects on the family.	The findings from this question which has several sub questions, the data from these questions will be explored in the findings sections 8.2.1; 8.3 9.3; and notably 9.3.2. These findings were discussed in Discussion Chapter Section 10.2 Liquid Education
Question 5:	How does knowledge and/or language acquisition in HE influence the immediate and extended family?	The findings from this question which has several sub questions, were discussed under sections 8.2.1; 8.2.3; 8.2.4; 9.3.3; 9.3.4; 9.4; 9.5 the data from these questions will be explored in Discussion Chapter 10.2.1 Liquid Education; 10.4; 10.5 Collective transformations

Table 1 Collective focused Research Questions (Above)

Individually Orientated Research questions	<u>Individually</u> focused questions on the HE experiences and biographies; which were incorporated into the family biographies.	The findings from Q6-Q9 in the main were incorporated into Chapter 7 of the research findings and also integrated as explained below into various sub themes. Q.10 was discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2 HE policy
Question 6:	How do the students experience social class as first-generation learners ?	The findings from this question were incorporated into the findings discussed under the Family Vignettes 7.3, 9.3 Liquid education; Extended family 9.3.4 language theme 9.5. The findings were discussed in sections 10.2.2 socialisation; 10.2.3 Language 10.4 Disruption to the reality of everyday family life. Discussion on Liquid Education and was an undercurrent in many other themes as the participants were first generation learners.
Question 7:	What impact does HE have on the self and or identity ?	The findings from this question were incorporated into the family stories under each dyadic pair section in the family story. It was also discussed in the Literature Review Chapter 3.
Question 8:	How does previous educational experience shape the student and the current HE learning experience individually and within the family?	The findings from this question HE and previous educational experiences were incorporated into the family vignettes in Chapter 7.

Question 9	How do the dyadic pair experience HE ?	The findings from this question were incorporated into the family vignettes Chapter 7 and into the relationship findings and Discussion Chapter 10 Sections 10.2, 10.4.
Question 10	What role has the HE policy landscape played in the emergence of this social phenomenon?	This question was discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2 HE policy.

Table 2 Individually Focused Questions (Above)

Before explaining the methods for this research, it was essential to ground this research firmly in its ontological, epistemological and theoretical foundations.

6.3 Research Philosophy

This section will draw from the work of Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Crotty (1998; 2003).

Research Framework	
Ontology	Constructivist
Epistemology	Interpretivist- Phenomenology
Methodology	Case Study
Methods	1. Educational Biographies 2. Individual Interviews 3. Family Focus Groups

Table 3 Research Framework Adapted from (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109)

This research lies within the constructivist paradigm; the ontology, epistemology, and methodology are situated and aligned with this tradition. The research instruments were chosen to elucidate the overarching research question, from a constructivist perspective. The ontological stance of this research was within the constructivist ontology, because the world of the family and individuals within the family, will be explored from the position that, knowledge and reality are based on human engagement with both people and their world, and diffused within a specific social context, within their own experience (Crotty, 2003) or culture. This was further embedded within the research process because the theoretical lens employed focused on the social construction of reality. The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), was discussed in the previous Chapter 5, the theoretical lens, with the aim that the ontological and epistemological assumptions for this research were in concert with one another.

6.3.1 Ontology

Ontology was very helpful as a researcher because it facilitated a constructive thought process about the objects in this research because it is a theory of objects and their relationship. The ontological position for this piece of research was constructivist. A consideration of ontology also led to a discussion about how the objects were categorised and helped to build the relationships between objects, or potential hierarchy between the objects. My thinking about ontology as part of this research process was reflexive as it helped me reflect on my assumptions about education. Different objects will have different meanings depending on the domain of knowledge or discipline they sit within. When the objects of research are placed within language, we are in fact grouping them into categories, we are creating relationships between them. Ontology is not about what is real or true, it is about one clear role in this PhD it helped me to link the particular of this research to the universal or domain of HE knowledge and research.

One could consider that within a PhD when you identify your original contribution to knowledge you are in fact identifying an ontological position, one where you link the specifics of your research and locate it to a wider domain of knowledge for example HE research or the social sciences. An ontological discussion ensures the rigour of this research, because it was like an foundation essential to the thesis. This research aimed to, in some small way, make ontology visible and understandable. It points to a consideration of not just what one will include in the research but rather what one will not include in the research; that was an ontological decision and one which guided the research process. This also includes a discussion of the limitations of the research (Discussed in Chapter 11 the Conclusion) as an ontological decision. All research questions require an ontology and depending on the question posed may require a different methodology to answer the research question. The objects or pieces of furniture for this research are the family members and their associated HE institutions and their relationships. If Ontology is about the objects and their relationships, how shared experiences affect family dynamics, language, roles and relationships, then the methodology examines how we study them.

Constructivism seeks no single true social reality but focuses on the meaning-making activities of individuals and groups who must make sense of the contexts in which they find themselves (Lincoln, 1995). I found that the relational engagement between members of the family was captured in the family focus groups. Here, the participants and their families articulated how their social realities changed through their engagement with HE, and as they became more 'informed' through the process, the lens from which they viewed the world altered in tandem.

The constructivist paradigm is bound to the notion that reality is part of an ongoing social construction. This research captured the liquid effects of HE on the family and its members. For this research, ontology and epistemology will be discussed separately while acknowledging that

they are inextricably linked and that your ontological position gives rise to your epistemological position (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The following section examines epistemology and more specifically Phenomenology which was also previously examined in Chapter 5 (5.2).

6.3.2 Epistemology

A discussion and exploration of epistemology examines the scope and nature of human knowledge, forcing a researcher to ask how I know what I know? It is about your experience of knowledge. There are two ways we acquire knowledge, A Priori and Posterior. A priori knowledge is knowledge known independent of experience it is based on reasoning, non-empirical knowledge. Posterior knowledge is that which is gathered through experience (like an experiment) and that brings you to knowledge. Epistemology points us to the nature of knowledge and queries our relationship with experience, how we justify the knowledge created in the research process as a legitimate source. This moves the researcher to the point that by considering this branch of philosophy, it reminds the researcher to consider the origins, the nature, the methods, and the limits to the research.

The assumption underpinning the epistemological position of this research was that knowledge is created in the interaction between the researcher and the participants, and between the dyads "most contemporary qualitative researchers hold that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered" (Stake, 1995, p.100). This research does not aim to prove it was not deterministic or reductionist (Hesse, 1980); it stands firmly within the interpretivist tradition, acknowledging that knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation (Byrne, 2001; Giddens, 1984 (Double Hermeneutic); Schutz, 1967 (First order and second order categories)). As Gert (2015) asserts in the field of educational research; research can be divided between those who seek to determine cause and effect and those, who just as this research aims to, view the process of research itself as "a human event of communication, meaning-making, and interpretation"(p.11). Taking an epistemological stance was essential "in order to explain how we know what we know and to determine the status, to be ascribed to the understandings we reach" (Crotty, 1998, p. 18). This research was positioned within the interpretivist approach because it sought "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). This research has given rise to a fine-grained insight into the socially situated, culturally saturated, and relationally influenced lives of first-generation families, engaging in HE.

As reality is part of an ongoing construction the ontological and epistemological perspectives also gave rise to the choice of an appropriate theoretical underpinning for this research, that of Berger

and Luckman (1966). It is imperative to explain at this point how the theory influenced the methodological decisions and choices of method for this research.

6.3.3 Theoretical Lens

Employing Berger and Luckmann (1966) had several implications regarding the role of a researcher, which relates to first-order and second-order categories. It was through the latter aim as a researcher means that their purpose was to apply second-order categories to the participant's first-order categories, in an attempt to recreate their lifeworld. However, it is essential to discuss Berger and Luckman's (1966) phenomenological approach in this context because it provided the theoretical lens (the second-order categories), which had profound implications for the approach to methodology and methods employed. The social constructions of everyday life have a fine-grained relational, processual nature to them in that they are made up of a meaning-making process that occurs between the family members while engaging in HE.

Within the family, individuals develop their concept of self, roles, and identities through interactions with other family members (Burgess, 1926). This research focused on the subjective knowledge of the participants and the intersubjective meaning family members gave to the process of engaging in HE because "all interaction emerges from the meanings with which people imbue events" (Rosenblatt & Fischer, 1993, p. 168). This meant relationships and processes were paramount to this research (research questions and analysis) because of the theoretical frame employed and the research question; the sociology of knowledge analyses the 'processes in which the construction of people's realities and meanings occur' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 1) 'in-between'. Berger and Luckman's (1966) phenomenological approach to the sociology of knowledge was an appropriate theoretical lens to employ, as the aim of the research was to gain an insight into the 'lived realities of this group' (O'Shea, 2015b, p. 245; Webb, 2019), the family engaging in HE .

The theoretical lens served as an interpretative tool to explain this phenomenon's nuances; this application of theory to the findings will be demonstrated in stage 4 (Section 6.6.4.) of the analysis and in the Discussion Chapter 10. This research aimed towards a "balanced centering of theory" which hopefully resulted in (Collins & Stockton, 2018, p. 9) a significant contribution to knowledge. The purpose of employing Berger and Luckmann (1966) was not to disprove or discount the work of other theorists as explored in the literature review Chapters 3 and 4 but to add to the body of research with an underutilised theoretical lens.

6.5 The Case Study

The constructivist perspective was employed and a qualitative case study was selected and designed. Various other qualitative studies, like grounded theory, were considered during the research process. It was not employed because this research had a theoretical position of Berger and Luckmann (1966) the aim of the research was not to develop a theory. Grounded theory aims to generate theory from data, but grounded theory's open-ended nature did not fit with the research question posed. It was also evident that many "educational researchers used grounded theory as a data analysis technique rather than as a complete methodological approach" (Stough & Lee, 2021, p.1). An ethnographic examination of the families was considered but because I was unable to live with the families and undertake participant observation this was ruled out.

To answer the central research question, a "comprehensive research strategy" the case study (Yin, 2002, p. 14; 2003; McDonald, 2021; Erias & Huijser, 2021) was employed to ensure methodological congruence. Through the "acquisition of cases based on experience, it is evident that knowledge cannot be divorced from context, the knowledge is context dependent knowledge" (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 221).

In terms of when to use a case study Yin (2009) identifies three possible reasons:

1. How and why questions are being posed
2. The investigator has little control over the events
3. Focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with a real-life context (p. 2).

When the work of Yin (2009) was applied to this study, FGF in HE was a contemporary phenomenon, and the real-life context was the family, which corresponds with point C) above. Flyvberg (2006) discussed the strategies for selecting cases; in a case study, he examined the extreme or deviant cases, and the purpose of these were to obtain information on unusual cases, which can be especially problematic. "Extreme cases often reveal more information... it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences..." (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229). Merriam (1998) distinguishes between three types of Case studies.

1. Particularistic
2. Descriptive
3. Heuristic

This research was a multiple case study and comprised of five cases, where each family (Brannen, 2006) in HE was considered a case.

Five families participated in this research over two years; they engaged in individual in-depth interviews, volunteered their educational biographies by interview, and partook in family focus groups as they engaged in HE. This research was particularistic (Merriam, 1988) because it focuses on a phenomenon. A further distinction was then necessary between Ethnographic, Historical, Psychological, and Sociological (Merriam, 1998, p. 35). This case study was sociological because it examined the experiences of family members engaging in HE, situated within the influence of the family as a social institution, engaging in the intergenerational transmission of education through engagement with HE.

This decision to use a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006) as previously mentioned, rather than a "holistic case study with embedded units", was taken because in order to examine the different contexts for each of the cases, the multiple case study "allowed the researcher to analyse within each setting and across settings, while a holistic case study with embedded units only allows the researcher to understand one unique extreme critical case" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). Yin (2009) explains, "the simplest multiple case design would be the selection of two or more cases that are believed to be literal replications, such as a set of cases" (Yin, 2009, p. 59; Yin, 2003). Each family, had distinguishing characteristics and in order to emphasise the individuality of each family, each family was considered a case. The families selected were then considered to be cases because they satisfied a set of criteria (Table 5) devised at the beginning of the research process, which gave rise to 'a set of cases' (the five families with intergenerational dyadic pairs engaging in HE).

6.6 Chronology of the research Process and Four Stages

This section examines the sampling strategy, ethical approval timeline and the four stages of the research process.



Fig 6. 1 Chronology of the Research Process

Ethical approval was sought and granted before commencing the research process, as per Table 4.

Stage of Research	Method	Date of Ethical Approval	Date of Participation
Stage 1	Literature Review		2014-2015
Stage 2	Questionnaire	Feb 2015	April 2015
Stage 3	-Interviews -Educational - Biographies -Family Focus Groups (Families without U18 Yr. Old Participants)	October 2016	Nov 2016-June 2017
Stage 3	Family Focus Groups (Families with U18 Yr. old Participants)	August 2017 Amended Ethical Approval granted to include U18	September 2017- March 2018

Table 4 Timeline of Ethical Approval

Data generation took place between September 2016 and March 2018. A detailed timeline documenting the research process specific to each family is included in the Appendix C. The next section examines stage 1, the Literature Review.

6.6.1 Stage 1 Literature Review



Fig 6. 2 The Literature Review

The research took place over four stages. Stage 1 was an in-depth literature review of the general thematic area of FGS in HE and HE policy. The literature review began with Berger and Luckmann's work (1966) and it was also necessary to engage with the criticisms of their work. While not limited to the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), the literature review was guided by their emphasis on the socialisation process, Language, Roles and Relationships. This stage generated some topics that would later become integral to the research questions (Hart, 1998). This is documented above, beginning in 2014 and ending in 2015; in part, this is incorrect as the literature review was an ongoing process that continued up until January 2024. The "How" of the literature review at this stage is explored in more detail below.

There was a gap identified in the literature that explored the intergenerational dyadic pair's experiences in HE and its impact on the family, in effect, that became my original contribution to

the HE domain knowledge. The themes that emerged from the literature informed by the theoretical frame and from the research process itself gave rise to the literature review format in chapters 3 and 4. Part one of the literature review was an in-depth analysis of Irish HE policy to situate the phenomenon within the HE policy landscape.

A comprehensive review of 97 policy documents was undertaken, and was filtered down to pertinent policy documents from the 1965 Investment in Education Report, up to and concluding with the HEA Act 2022. All documents were reviewed in depth, and only documents relevant to the social phenomenon were included in the literature review in Chapter 2, Section 2, HE policy.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the literature review began with comprehensive key searches see Fig 6.3, employing Boolean logic (See below the Search terms used). The results were filtered for theoretical fit, and were qualitative pieces of research in the main; while quantitative pieces of research were read and are referenced in the literature, they did not feature prominently in the literature review because the research question required a qualitative approach.

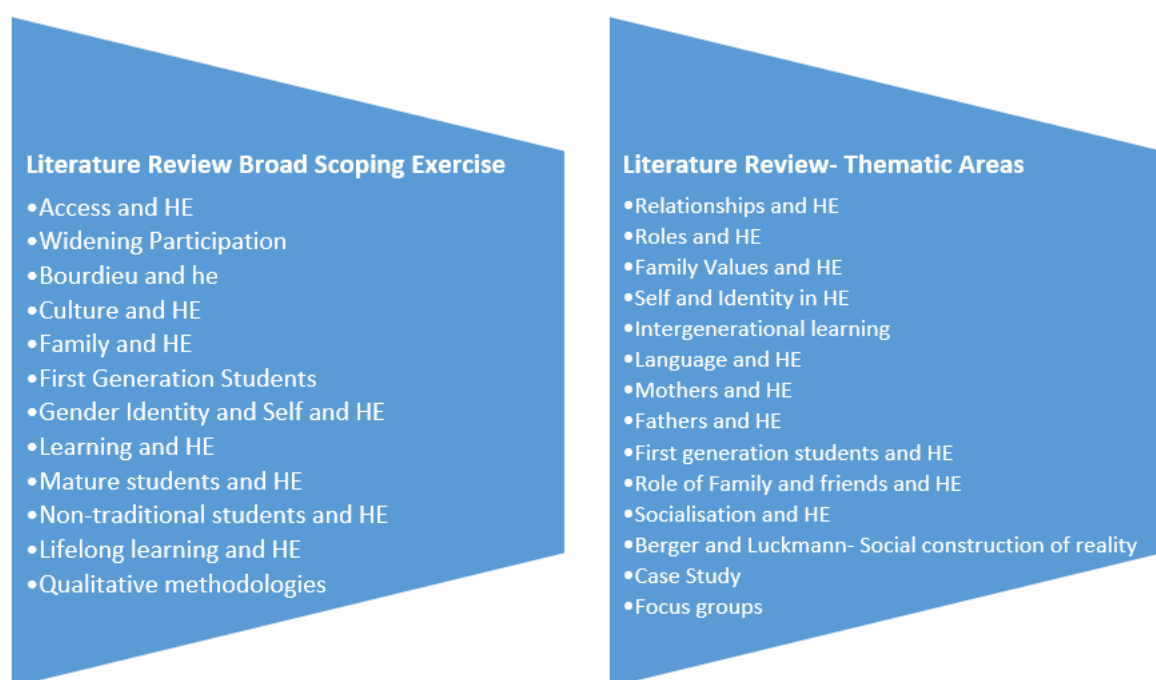


Fig 6. 3 Literature review search process

The examination of the literature resulted in a tabular form output for the entire research process, resulting in a 69-page 30,000-word document listing and indexing books and journal articles pertinent to the research questions and theoretical frame. The literature review process, informed by the theory, was essential in designing the research questions and the sub-questions explored during the interviews and the family focus groups. The theoretical analysis of Berger

and Luckmann's (1977) work in Chapter 5 proved difficult because of the spatial limitations of the thesis. The overall aim was to present an in-depth examination of their theory and the application of their theory was deferred to the Discussion Chapter 10.

The next stage presented is stage two of the research process, the questionnaire, which was primarily employed to recruit (Negrin et al., 2022) families to participate in the research and to confirm the research phenomenon.

6.6.2 Stage 2 Questionnaire and sampling strategy

Purposeful sampling was employed because, according to Patton (1990), "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (p.169). A set of criteria was devised (Table 5) and the families were selected within the institution with the assistance of a key informant (Gibbs, 2017). This gatekeeper was the Student Union president with a broad understanding and knowledge of the students within the institution (Keane, 2009; Lodico et al., 2010).

A questionnaire was designed and piloted see (Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire). The questionnaire was used for two reasons: to ensure the phenomenon existed before the research process began and to use it as a recruitment tool. The questionnaire was granted ethical approval in February 2015, and it was then distributed to all students by email. This email was sent to 2000 students by the students union president in April 2015 only on one campus (this was before the merger to become TU Dublin as per discussion in Chapter 1), and there were 191 responses. Of these responses, 27% or n=51 students were attending college simultaneously with another family member. To gain an insight into intergenerational participation in HE, n=13 (7%) students attended HE at the same time as a family member from a different generation. The findings from the questionnaire gave me the impetus to proceed, as this confirmed the presence of the HE phenomenon that I had experienced in my class as explained in Chapter 1 (1.2 Origins of the Thesis). An open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire was employed to fully explain the research objectives and to recruit the families to participate in the qualitative research.

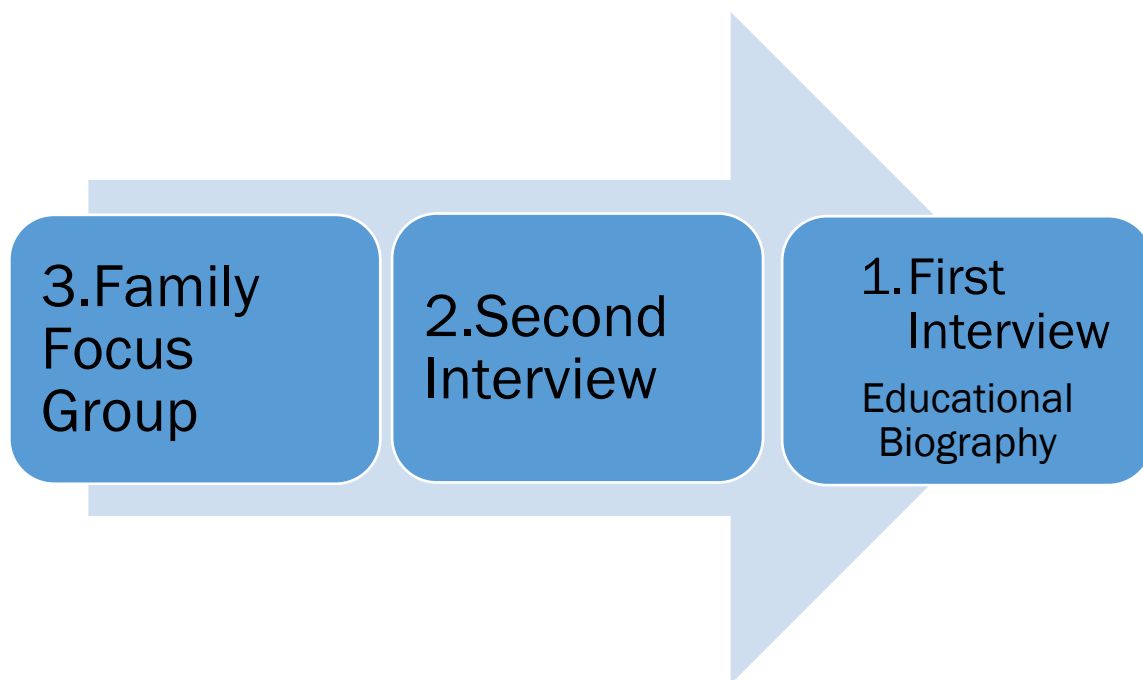
Five families were willing to participate and met the criteria for inclusion (See Table 5). This was followed up with a face-to-face meeting to discuss the research and establish trust (Podluka & Vianna, 2021) at this initial stage and ensure that they were willing to participate. This was a very important stage in the research process because getting participants' buy-in was extremely important, especially considering they all had jobs outside of college attendance. The fact that I was 'an insider' in the organisation was a distinct benefit at this point in the research process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Asselin, 2003).

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION IN THE RESEARCH	
1.	Two or more family members from different generations engaging in HE concurrently , e.g. mother and son, father and daughter.
2.	Both participants were in receipt of the SUSI grant , method of socio-economic capture.
3.	First-generation HE family, first person in their family to attend HE (Thomas and Quinn, 2007).
4.	Both participants residing in the same home .
5.	At least one participant was studying in ITB
6.	There was a temporal dimension in that they must be participating in HE concurrently (Parent student and adult child).

Table 5. Criteria for inclusion in the research

Each of the five cases selected to participate was a family; two or more members from a different generation, both FGS in HE and engaging in HE concurrently. There is both a temporal (research occurred while both were in HE concurrently and the research was carried out between 2015-2018) and geographic (Family members must live in the same house, attending a HE institution in the Republic of Ireland) dimension to the cases acknowledging that the five cases sit within the HE policy landscape as per the discussion of HE policy in Chapter 2, Section 2. This quantitative research is included as a stage in the research process even though the data was not included in the research findings but it may provide the basis for further research. The next stage 3 explains the qualitative methods employed.

6.6.3 Stage 3: The Qualitative Research Process- Research methods



The methods employed in this research included educational biographical interviews, individual interviews, and family focus groups, "each data source is one piece of the puzzle with each piece contributing to the researchers understanding of the whole phenomenon" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554).

Following the identification of potential participants via the questionnaire, I invited them to participate in the research. I met with all participants informally first to explain the research and confirm their commitment to the research. This was then followed up with a detailed description of the research process, provided to them by email, which included Appendix E an information pack, which included information on informed consent in advance of their participation in the research.

	Methods prior to consultation with participants and pilot	Methods employed post pilot
1. Photo-journals	√	X
2. Diaries	√	X
3. In-depth interviews	√	√
4. Family Focus Groups	√	√
5. Educational biographies	√	√

Table 6 Pre and post pilot methods

I initially planned for the participants to complete and partake in photo journals, diaries, in-depth interviews, family focus groups, and educational biographies. A pilot study was undertaken with a family before commencing the research. The pilot involved two individual interviews with a mother and son in HE concurrently. The pilot helped "estimate the number of cases needed to allow for a detailed and rich analysis" (Saddler & Sundin, 2020, p. 335). This experience forced me to revisit my expectations around the time commitment from the participants.

Due to the nature of full-time HE, the students had very high contact hours, and all students had part-time work outside of HE. Therefore, the research design needed to be flexible enough to allow for this. The research process was refined to suit the time available to the participants so that they could engage with the research (Cohen, 1984). The finalised version of the research process was educational biographies (Marandet & Wainwright, 2010), in-depth interviews, and family focus groups with the dyadic pairs' immediate family members. Unfortunately, as stated above in Table 6, participants could not engage with the diaries and the photo-journals.

The ramifications and implications for employing the three foci¹⁹, as posited by Plummer (1975) above, are threefold. The inner side of the students were examined through educational biographies and individual interviews and the findings integrated into Chapter 7, the family

¹⁹ Plummer (1975) suggests that the world may be viewed as a subjective reality, as a process and as interactive.

1.The first directs the student to study the inner side of life, to look at meanings, and to analyse the ways in which the world is socially constructed.

2.The second directs them to study the emergent and constantly changing nature of social life.

3.While the third suggests that the individual is best constantly studied in conjunction with some significant others or in collective action (p. 11).

biographies. The emergent and changing nature of social life was captured through the educational biographies and interviews. Plummer (1975) acknowledges it is best to study individuals in conjunction with others, and the family focus group gained an insight into the interactions and meaning-making process that the family experiences collectively while they engage in HE. The family focus groups were also viewed "as a space of inter- and intragenerational dialogue" (Hall, 2016, p. 1025) and were also necessary to capture "not only family talk but also talk among children..." (Morek, 2015, p.239).

The following sections will span the three main methods employed in this research: educational biographies, in-depth interviews and family focus groups. The methods employed were selected and informed by the literature and the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Educational Biography

As C. Wright Mills contends, "neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (1970, p. 3). Educational Biographies were employed because 'the self' of the HE students had developed in tandem with their experiences of the education system prior to HE (Marandet & Wainwright, 2010). Their choice to attend HE lay embedded within their previous experiences of education and their current HE experience needed to be situated within this previous experience. Educational biographies were employed (Merrill & West, 2009; Merrill, 1999; Merrill & Alheit, 2004; West 1996; Britton & Baxter, 1999) to gain an insight into the student from an individual perspective.

Armstrong (1982) contends that when engaging in biographical research, one must acknowledge the role of "retrospective reinterpretation not only brought by the limitations of memory and recall, but due to the development of a new *weltanschauung*, which not only affects the perception of the current situation, but also the interpretation of past events" (p.44). The aim was to draw attention to the "processual nature of people's lives" (Armstrong, 1982, p. 53; Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and their previous experiences of education while acknowledging the role of retrospective interpretation (Merrill, 1999). This was an essential tool in the research process because it was necessary to examine "how biographical characteristics influence parents' experiences" and child students' experiences of University (Marandet & Wainwright, 2010, p. 787; Webber, 2015). The biographical, narrative stories in West (1996) confirm the necessity for linking culture and social relationships with the intimate and internal life of individuals to gain an understanding of their composing selves while individually and part of a family engaging in HE.

The participants were initially going to write their own personal, educational biography. However, unfortunately, all participants stated that they did not have time to complete the educational biography and preferred to talk through their educational biography in a separate individual interview. Biographies were employed to reveal both the inner and outer influencing structures on the lives of the participants (Appendix F examines the questions posed in the educational biographies with the participants). Some of these outer structuring influences come from a policy or institutional level and these were discussed in Chapter 2, section 2, HE Policy. For example as all participants were on the SUSI grant they all stated that it would have been impossible for them to go to HE without certain government interventions. The biographies added to the thematic analysis because "only through the collection of multiple biographies of people of a kind will the dominant themes begin to emerge" (Armstrong, 1982, p. 43). The educational biography (Kupfer, 2012) of the participants added to the depth of understanding gained from the participants' lives across multiple cases and in the context of the family as a collective potentially experiencing the HE liquid effects (Lincoln, 1995; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). Ultimately the reason for the inclusion of biographies in the research is because they "offer rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other" (Merrill & West, 2009, p. 1).

The educational biographies were developed with the participants and while there was a clear set of questions developed (See Appendix F) the questions were informed by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Notably the questions about the home, primary and secondary socialisation, the role education had played previously in their lives and the influential people in their lives from an educational perspective, examining roles and relationships with family members and teachers were influenced by the work of Berger and Luckmann. The questions were also formulated in line with the framework devised by Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) as cited in Knott et al., (2022) for both the educational biographies and the individual interviews (Table 7). The educational biographies were all undertaken in the institution where the students were based, they lasted on average over three hours. The data gathered was vast and necessitated many months of transcriptions, and analysis.

Table 1 | Types of interview questions (developed from Kvale and Brinkmann⁸⁰)

Type of question	Example
Introductory	Can you tell me about ... (something specific)?
Follow-up	Non-verbal cues: mmm..., nod Verbal cues: repeat back keywords to participants, ask for reflection or unpacking of point just made
Probing	Can you say a little more about X? Why do you think X...? (for example, Why do you think X is that way? Why do you think X is important?)
Specifying	Can you give me an example of X?
Abstract	How did you feel when X happened?
Indirect	How do you think other people view X?
Structuring	Thank you for that. I'd like to move to another topic...
Direct (later stages)	When you mention X, are you thinking like Y or Z?
Interpreting	So, what I have gathered is that...
Ending	I have asked all the questions I had, but I wanted to check whether there is something else about your experience/understanding we haven't covered? Do you have any questions for me?
Listening	(non-verbal) We note that waiting and listening can also leave space for participants to open up or discuss more without verbal prompting
Silence	(non-verbal)

Adapted with permission from REF.⁸⁰, Sage Publications.

Table 7. Types of Interview Questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008 as cited in Knott et al., 2022, p.4)

The biographies also offered a focus for gaining insights into the process of internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) of the knowledge acquired in HE and how this process had an impact on the collective of the family, did other people see them change and did this force other people in their families to change too. The educational biographies were employed to add the context to the research findings on the collective dimensions of HE, and the findings from them were presented in the family biographies, in Chapter 7. The next section examines the role of interviews in the research process.

Interviews

Individual in-depth interviews undertaken with the participants were viewed as part of a meaning-making process (Saddler & Sundin, 2020; Lareau, 2021; Knott et al., 2022) and to probe for further information generated in the educational biographies (guided by Table 7.). The interviews were an opportunity "to value the interviewee as a person and not as an object" (Merrill, 1999, p.45) and to build a relationship of trust. Identifying and clarifying my role as a researcher was an essential part of the research process and the work of Lodico et al. (2010) played a critical role in formulating it:

Researcher is primarily a listener who prepares interview questions and facilitates interactions, whether in a focus group or semi-structured interview situation.

Researcher focuses on commonalities and individual differences in how individuals describe the meaning of their experiences.

Initial observations and deep researcher reflections may be conducted to prepare for interviews (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 167-168).

The aim within the interview process and all other parts of the research process, was to ensure that the methods employed answered the research questions posed. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, some questions were predetermined, they were devised with the nature of a flowing conversation in mind to ensure the participants felt safe and comfortable (Lareau, 2021). The interview questions were guided by the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and focused on six key areas documented in Appendix G, roles, language, relationships, the educational socialisation process in the family, higher education in the family home and self and identity. The literature guided the interview questions to notions of power, gender and social class for consideration. The framework for question development highlighted above by Knott et al., (2022) was factored into the process (Table 7).

The participants were interviewed three times in different contexts, both individually and as part of a family focus group; this added depth to the data and introduced a temporal dimension to the research (Finn, 2014). An interview guide and informed consent documentation, with a series of questions attached, was distributed to the participants prior to the interview (Appendix E). Prior to engaging in research with the participants' informed consent was obtained (Appendix E). The "students were also asked to keep diaries of their thoughts and feelings, including their responses to the interviews" (West, 1996, p. 29). This was the plan at the outset of the research process. Unfortunately, it did not prove fruitful due to time constraints in their lives and they were unable to complete this. A series of probes in the second interview were incorporated and shaped the interview depending on the findings from the first interview (Educational Biography). This was akin to a rolling process, where one stage of the research process shaped in part the next stage. This was to give the participants power and reaffirm, I was listening; they were heard (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). It was also an opportunity to check with the participants if I had accurately interpreted their conversation from their educational biography (Caretta & Perez, 2019). This added to the methodological rigor and reliability of the research because it was based on "shared analytical understanding between researchers and research participants" while they may not always agree it was essential to engage in the "dialogical and recursive research process" (Caretta & Perez, 2019, p. 359).

Revisiting previous topics discussed in the first interview, second interview and the family focus groups, acknowledged and brought to the fore the process, often ignored in qualitative research and particularly in educational biographies, that of "retrospective interpretation" (Garfinkle 1967; Armstrong, 1982; Mannay, 2013). As Barthes (1986) noted the "speech act can never be the same as the one who acted yesterday: the I of the discourse can no longer be the site where a previously stored-up person is innocently restored" (p.17). As a reflexive researcher one of the aims was to assist the participants to tell their stories. According to Seidman (2012) "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of the other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p.9), this was of paramount importance during the research process and assisted also in establishing trust. I gave the participants the choice where they would like to partake in the second interview and eight of the second individual interviews were undertaken in the institution where they were studying. Two were undertaken in Trinity College Dublin because it was easier for the participants to get there. The duration of the interview ranged between 2-3 hours.

During the interview process 'the self', roles and identity were explored in order to gain access into the individual's social construction of roles and relationships within the family (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). While also noting that "drawing out the complexities and temporal dimensions of relationship and personal change can be difficult" (Finn, 2014, p. 39) especially when these changes are happening within the individual and in the family home concurrently. Therefore, another method was required to gain an insight into the osmotic boundaries between the student, the external environment of the family home and HE. Morley (1980) contends that "much individually based interview research is flawed by a focus on individuals as atoms divorced from their social context (p.33)". The next section examines the family focus group and the engagement with the families as interconnected and relational (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Family Focus Groups



Fig 6. 4 Family Focus Groups

It was essential to gain an insight into the collective roles, relationships, and educational values and how they have been influenced and shaped by the family collectively (Wibeck et al., 2007; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Within the family focus groups, the opinions of the participants were explored collectively rather than individually because "multiple voices distils an essence, which does not assume that there is only one perspective or lived reality but instead recognises the multiplicity of experience" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 250). It is worth noting that separate ethical approval (Appendix D) was granted for the family members under 18 years of age, to facilitate their participation in the family focus groups.

The family focus groups were conducted with four of the families. One was undertaken in the family home, one was undertaken in Trinity College Dublin and two in the institution in which they attended. I asked the families where would they like the focus group to occur and only one family as stated wanted me to travel to their family home. The durations of the family focus groups were two hours. I had anticipated a difference in the engagement of the families depending on where the focus group occurred, this was not the case and irrespective of the setting the families engaged well with the research topics. The Family focus groups lasted on average between two and a half hours to three hours. In advance of the family focus groups I revisited all the individual interviews for each dyadic pair and then through the prism of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the literature, I honed the topics for discussion in the family focus groups. The main areas for the family focus groups were dependent to some degree by what the dyadic pairs had disclosed in their individual interviews and also around themes as examined in the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) of Roles, Relationships, language, socialization and essentially aiming to capture how or if in fact HE had come into the home, this would then determine if there were liquid HE effects. (See Appendix H for an overview and details of the

family focus groups topics and questions). Liquid education was explored and detailed in Section 1.5.

Engaging family members who were not in HE, was essential to elucidate their experience, and it gave rise to voluminous accounts of their experiences, which in HE literature was mostly ignored (Hall, 2016; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010). The HE students occupied a 'double modality of belonging' between home and HE (Buckingham et al., 2006; Lonie & Dicken, 2016; Wainwright & Marandet, 2011). It was essential to explore how HE had an impact on the students in HE and also the non-HE participants. The family focus group aimed to capture the process of the collective experience of HE which uncovered the joint meaning-making and negotiation, as the family engaged in HE as a collective (Smithson, 2006). The family focus group served to "illuminate our understanding of intergenerational relations because it emphasises the meanings that people attach to their experiences" (Becker, 1997 cited in Bengtson et al., 2005 p. 403).

The objective of the family focus group, as Robinson (2012) explained, was "to create an environment where they could talk, establish trust and where we managed conflict and any disagreements, leading to the generation of new knowledge" (p.401). The members of the focus group were known to each other, and this gave rise to power dynamics being exposed and personalities playing out their roles within the family focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Kornbluh, 2023; Madriz, 2003). The individual interviews highlighted the power relations and group processes in the family prior to the family focus groups, so these were noted and drawn out during the focus groups. The "soliciting of rich data participatory and authentic group dialogue while attending to power" (Kornbluh, 2023, p. 1) suggests that this can be achieved by the following:

- a) fostering a climate seeking equitable participation,
- b) engaging in critical self-reflexivity
- c) capturing moments of convergence and divergence in perspectives (p.2)

A voice was given to all family members during the process, this involved skills in group facilitation (Halcomb et al., 2007). The focus group acted as a reliability measure of the interviewee's accounts of family life in both the individual interviews and the educational biographies (Fern, 2001).

The family members needed to be moderated to some degree so that all family members' voices were heard.

The power shifted from the interviewer to the participants and I then realised that my role in fact was to facilitate their interactions "the researcher becomes a listener and one who encourages the dialogue to continue" (Becker, 1974, p. 35). Focus groups are "a mechanism for placing the control of this interaction in the hands of the participants rather than the researcher" (Morgan, 1993, p. 18). This began as a difficulty but in the end was a success as I understood my role and that did shift from wanting to be in control, to letting go of control and moving into the 'in-between' space of facilitator and listener (Fleming, 2013). The families opened up and trusted me during the family focus groups this was not an easy task but I believe was assisted by the fact that I was an 'insider' in the institution (Asselin, 2003; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The next section documents the process of analysis.

6.6.4 Stage 4 Analysis

This section describes the analysis employed and examines the theoretical assumptions which informed it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Transparency in the analysis process ultimately added to the rigour, trustworthiness, and credibility of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Sterling, 2001). In qualitative research, "to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent and exhaustive manner" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 1).

Thematic analysis

This research did not begin with a hypothesis, but a theoretical framework on which it was founded. The analysis was to review the "data multiple times to examine both the differences and similarities in the experiences of participants and to probe more deeply into the essence of their experience" (Lodico et al., 2010, p.168).

Family Focus Group (Codes)	Individual Interviews and Educational Biographies (Codes)	Individual Interviews and educational Biographies (Codes)
Family 1 (F1FG)	Mother (F1P1)	Son (F1P2)
Family 2 (F2FG)	Mother (F2P3)	Daughter (F2P4)
Family 3 (F3FG)	Father (F3P5)	Son (F3P6)
Family 4 (F4FG)	Mother (F4P7)	Son (F4P8)
Family 5 (F5FG)	Mother (F5P9)	Son (F5P10)

Table 8. Coding process and Key

Codes were given to each family above Table 8. They were allocated a number 1-5 and then known as family 1; for example, each student participant became Family 1, Participant 1 as an example became F1P1. Each family was given a pseudonym, and each participant within each family was given a pseudonym. For the family Focus Groups, each family focus group was, for example, Family 1 Focus Group was F1FG. Each participant in the Family Focus group was respondent; R1 R2, and then within the analysis section, the codes may look like F1FGR1 (Family 1 Focus Group Respondent 1). Below is the table (Table No 9) of participants by Pseudo family name, participant's pseudo Name, Gender, age and educational status. Each member of the dyadic pair is identified as a Lead participant within the families.

Family No	Pseudo Name	Gender	Age	Educational Status
1.The Halligans				
	Mary (Lead)	F	40s Yrs. old	HE
	Gerry	M	40 s Yrs. old	HE
	David (Lead)	M	20 Yrs. old	HE
	Kenneth	M	14 Yrs. old	Secondary School
	Sarah	F	11 Yrs. old	Primary School
2.The Emugas				
	Precious (Lead)	F	44 Yrs. old	HE
	Olu (Lead)	F	18 Yrs. old	HE
	Jonna	M	20 Yrs. old	HE
	Elede	F	13 Yrs. old	Secondary School
	Sammon	M	45 Yrs. old	HE
3.The Latchfords				
	Tommy (Lead)	M	49 Yrs. old	HE

	Ian (Lead)	M	22 Yrs. old	HE
4.The Greenes				
	Tracy (Lead)	F	44 Yrs. old	HE
	Maurice	M	47 Yrs. old	Secondary School
	Declan	M	11 Yrs. old	Primary School
	Colm	M	14 Yrs. old	Disability services
	Ryan	M	17 Yrs. Old	Leaving Cert applied
	Dylan (Lead)	M	22 Yrs. Old	HE
5.The Morgans				
	Geraldine (Lead)	F	44 Yrs. Old	HE
	Michael	M	46 Yrs. Old	Primary School
	Lee (Lead)	M	20 Yrs. Old	HE
	Andy	M	18 Yrs. Old	Apprenticeship
	Ella	F	12 Yrs. Old	Primary School
	Joy	F	7 Yrs. Old	Primary School

Table 9 Above Table of Participants

All interviews and family focus groups were transcribed personally, each line of text was numbered, each respondent was identifiable by R1 R2 etc., this was then rearranged for analysis as P1 P2 which was used for the individual interviews and individual educational biographies. R1 R2 etc. was employed for the Focus groups to demark the difference between focus group findings and individual interview findings. I coded by hand and did not use any coding programmes or software. I wanted to become immersed in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process of transcribing and coding the data by hand meant that upon finishing the process, the research findings were illuminated to some degree before engaging in the analysis itself. As part of my transcriptions, I tried to capture the emotions of the participants when they laughed, cried, or paused to layer the experience with additional comments on the transcripts. I also tracked this in my fieldwork notes and keeping a "reflective journal" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 247) and then cross-checked this with the transcriptions through the time codes. The analysis process was two pronged approach, one with the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), and the emphasis in their work on themes of language roles, relationships and socialization which provided a framework for analysis, but secondly it was essential to leave space for other relevant themes to emerge, which were linked to the literature or original to the specific family's experiences.

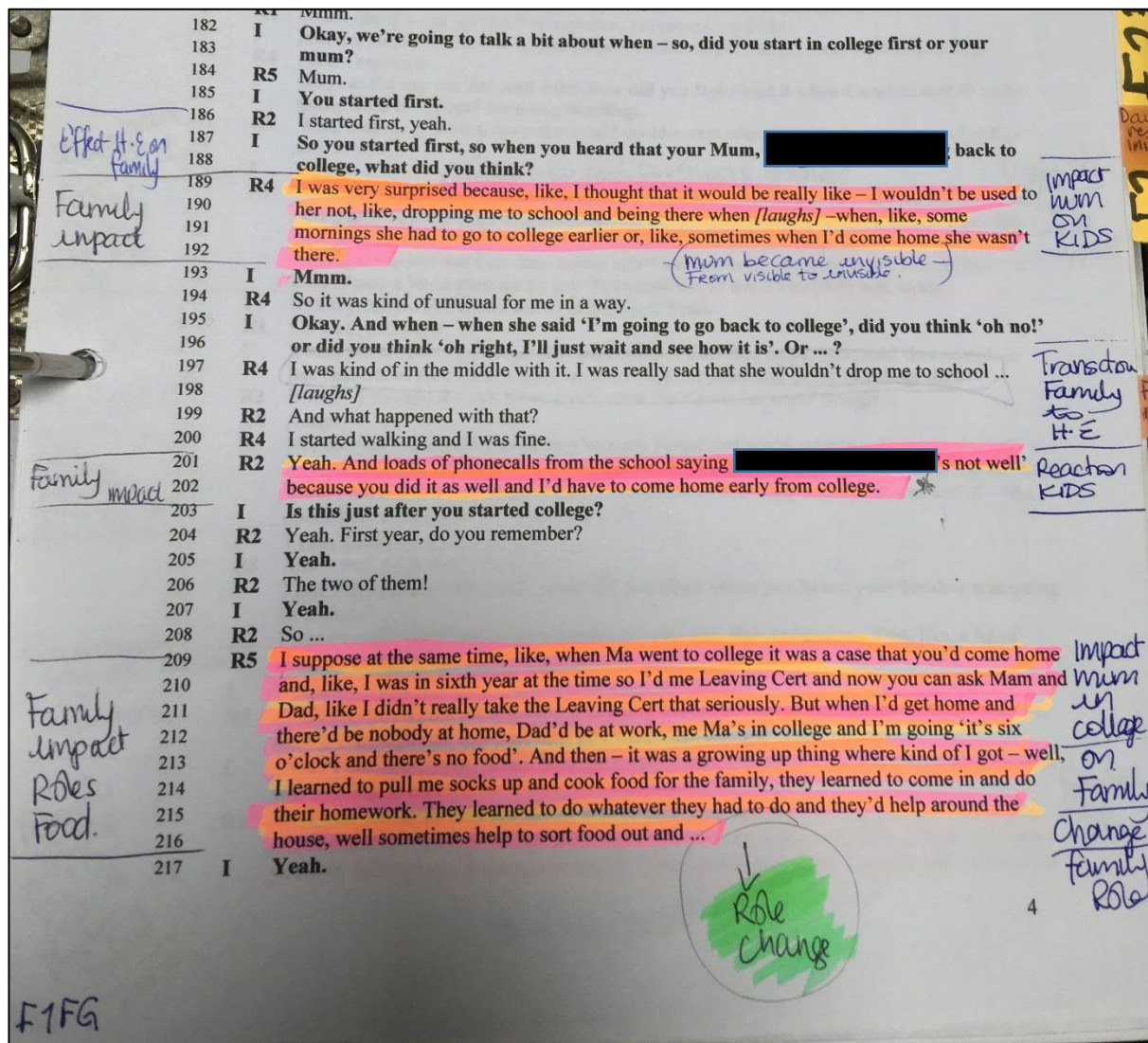


Fig 6. 5 Transcripts hand coded

There are two approaches to thematically analysing the data: inductively or deductively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I coded deductively or theoretically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as the theoretical framework employed in this research directly informed the research process. The thematic analysis was directed by the theoretical lens and the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarkes (2006) six phases of thematic analysis was employed as a guide to the analysis of this research (p. 87), Corbin and Strauss (2014) were considered but because their work is better suited to grounded theory overall there was a better fit for this research to Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 1 Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 10 Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Phase 1, Familiarizing yourself with your data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After each individual interview and Biographical interview and family focus groups they were transcribed as soon as possible. While personally transcribing the interviews and family focus groups was immensely time consuming it did add to the process of familiarisation which is sometimes an underestimated step in the research analysis process.

Phase 2, Generating Initial Codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The entire data set was hand-coded. Each response or comment by the participant was initially coded see Fig 6.5 Photograph of Step 1 of the analysis. Codes were typed and grouped with the sentence number as an identifying code. I generated an initial list of ideas about what the research was saying per participant while noting that "the process of coding is part of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The analysis was informed by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the literature.

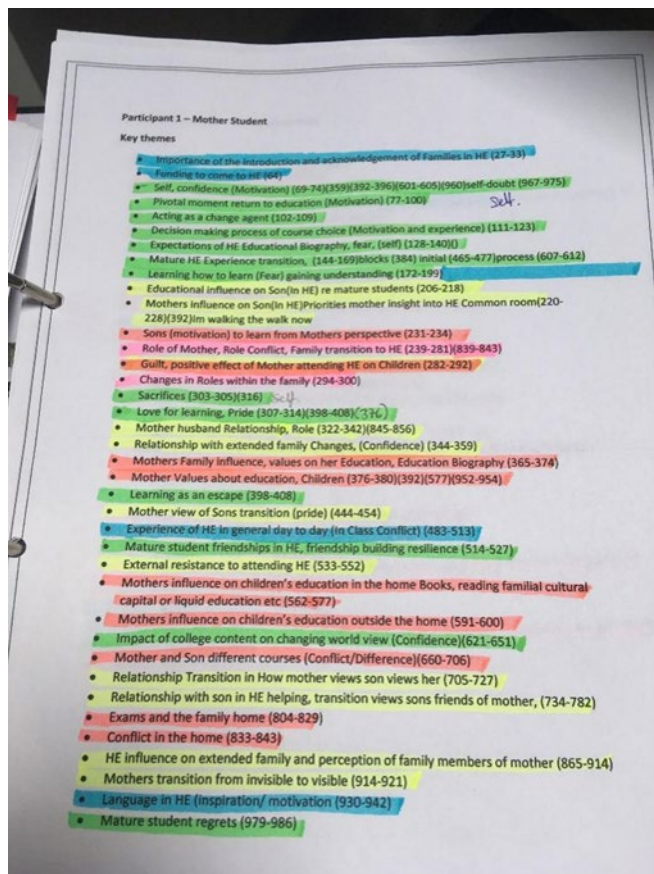


Fig 6. 6 Long List of Codes per participant

Phase 3 Searching for Themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this stage I had a very long list of codes (Fig 6.6) and various themes but it became clear as per the work of Braun and Clarke that I needed to begin the process of interpretative analysis (2006, p. 88). "During this phase researchers review the coded data extracts for each theme to consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 9). This was where I moved from codes to themes, using a white board to map out the themes to be refined was very useful see below (Fig 6.7).

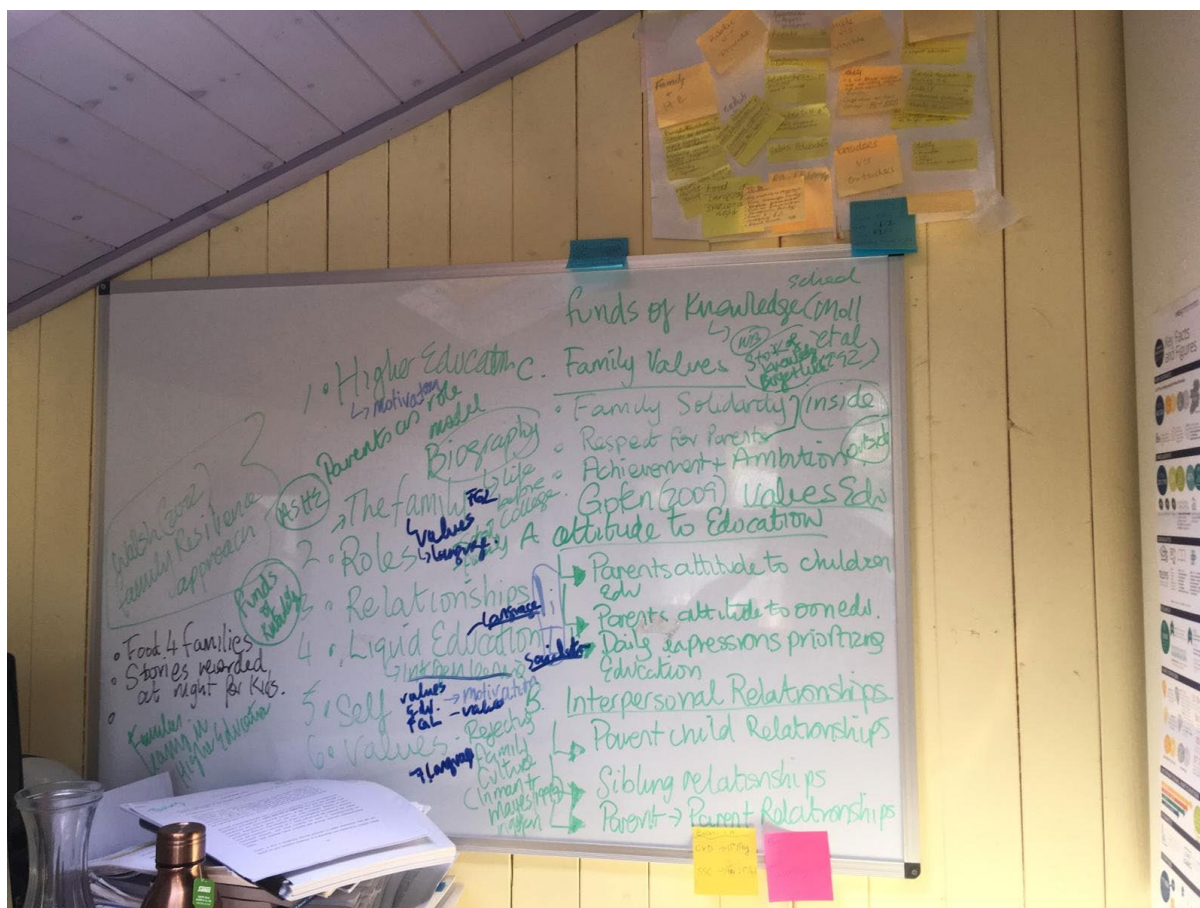


Fig 6. 7 Phase 4 Reviewing the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase 4, Reviewing the Themes: The themes were reviewed and refined until six key themes emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with a series of sub-themes. This stage in the analysis was driven by the research questions, the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the themes originating from the data itself. I was also trying to capture examples from the data of Liquid education (Section 1.5) and examples of this became evident in the review process of the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006), in their discussion on thematic analysis, advised at this point in the analysis process that it may require constant recoding, as the coding stage is ongoing. The data was constantly compared to the themes to make sure that my conclusions were firmly grounded in the data and that the data was able to speak through the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The question I asked myself at this point in the analysis process was "is there any text that does not fall under a theme which is relevant to one of the research questions"? as Braun and Clarke (2006) would refer to as miscellaneous and how this would be dealt with in the data.

Phase 5, Defining and Naming Themes: Using colour codes, assisted in the process of defining and naming the themes, the list of codes which had been typed up as per Fig 6.8 were highlighted depending on the general theme associated Orange – family, Pink- Roles, Green- Self/identity, Blue-HE and Yellow- Relationships. This process assisted in the definition process. Each theme had a corresponding list of sub-themes associated (see Table 11) as an example of this step for the theme of relationships.



Fig 6. 8 Phase 5 Map by colour Code (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

An example would be the theme relationships in Family 1 which was broken into 9 sub-themes and analysed (Table 11). The application of these sub-themes varied across the families as each family varied in family composition.

Theme: Relationship	
Sub Themes	
1.	Parent and Child in HE (RPCHE)
2.	Parent and child not in HE (RPCNHE)
3.	Parent and Partner (RPP)
4.	Parent and extended family (RPEF)
5.	Child in HE Peer Relationships (RCHEP)
6.	Child in HE and Siblings not in HE (CHESNHE)
7.	Child in HE and Extended family (RCHEEF)
8.	Sibling relationship non-HE Participants (RSNHE)
9.	Family relationships (RFR)

Table 11 Relationship Theme and associated sub-themes

All codes were revisited to see if there could be more than one code associated with the text. This also involved the process of subsuming specific themes into subthemes of individual theme codes. For example, educational values were initially identified at the individual student level. It was decided that 'The Family' as a thematic code has a subtheme of family values, and under the theme of self and identity, it had a subtheme of educational values that are at an individual level. This separation was made because due to the nature of individual interviews and the family focus group, family values may have been identified and explored by a non-HE member of the family. Family as a theme required a sub-theme of educational family values, which then became education socialisation and the family. After revisiting the data set several times, there was a category that did not have a thematic code assigned, and all text within this grouping was analysed. It necessitated adding a further Liquid Education theme to capture intergenerational learning, knowledge and language transfer and intergenerational learning between the dyadic pair in HE, in the family home. All data was revisited to recode all cases for the new thematic Code of Liquid Education, it became evident that there was in fact many examples from the data of liquid education effects. Then, the themes of HE as an individual experience and the self of the dyadic pairs were included in the individualistic findings, which provided context and included in Chapter 7, The family vignettes. A finalised version of the thematic mapping process was devised see below (Table 12) (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

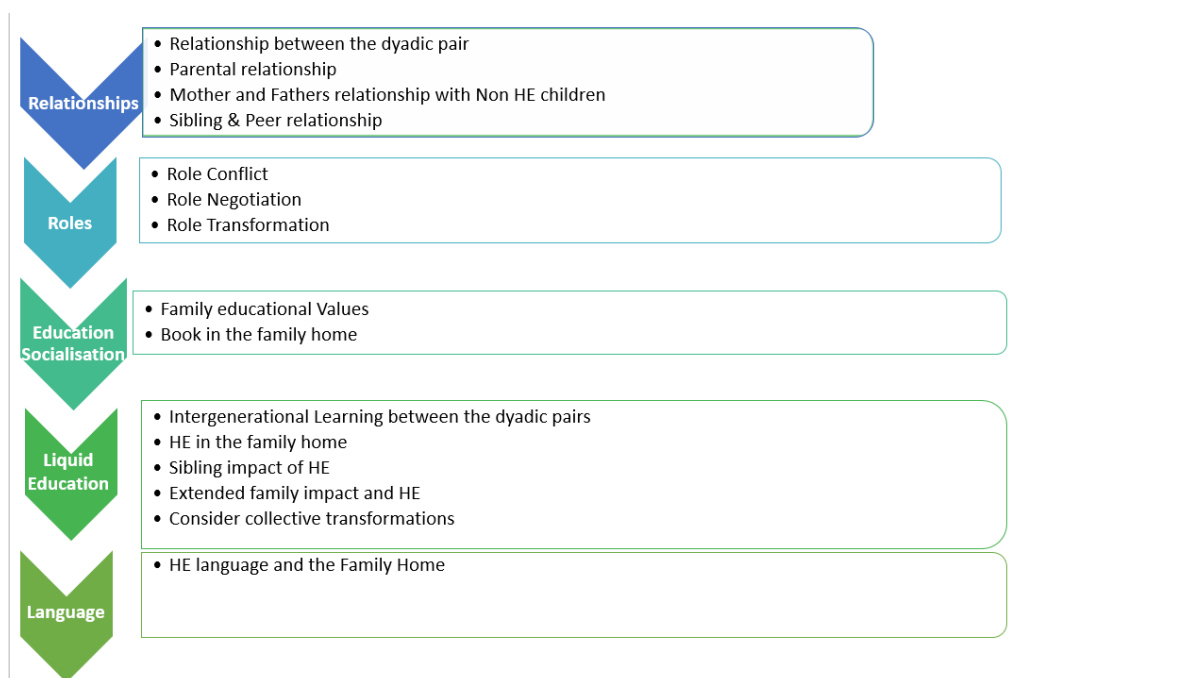


Table 12 Finalised Thematic Map

Each theme above was then defined (See below) to assist the verification of the process and to ensure each code was correctly attributed to the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Relationships

The definition of relationships was based on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), and they did not explicitly define relationships because their work is more broadly concerned with the processes by which people and groups of people construct their realities through relationships, interactions, and shared understandings. It could be understood as a socially constructed connection between individuals that is shaped by reciprocal typifications of habitualised actions. This means that relationships are formed and understood through the patterns of interaction and the meanings that individuals assign to the interactions they are engaged in.

Roles

The definition of Roles was informed by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and their definition of roles was embedded within their broader analysis of how social reality is constructed and maintained by human interaction. Roles can be understood as the patterns of behaviour expected of people in society and they are constructed through the process of habituation²⁰ and institutionalization²¹. This was previously discussed in Chapter (1.4) and Chapter 5.

²⁰ Habituation refers to the repetition of actions that become taken for granted as routines or habits therefore reducing the complexity of human interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966)

²¹ Institutionalization occurs when reciprocal roles are established and typified meaning that they become recognised by others and accepted as patterns of behaviour associated with specific social positions.

Educational Socialization

Berger and Luckmann (1966) defined socialisation as "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society" (p. 130). Educational socialisation focused on the aspects of the socialisation process which influenced the participant's education.

Liquid education (LE) is discussed and defined in the Introduction, Section 1.5. For this section see below a diagram which summarises LE. When searching for evidence of LE in the data, changes were used as evidence of liquidity, for example, changes in behaviours, attitudes, or the family's experiences of the home changing.

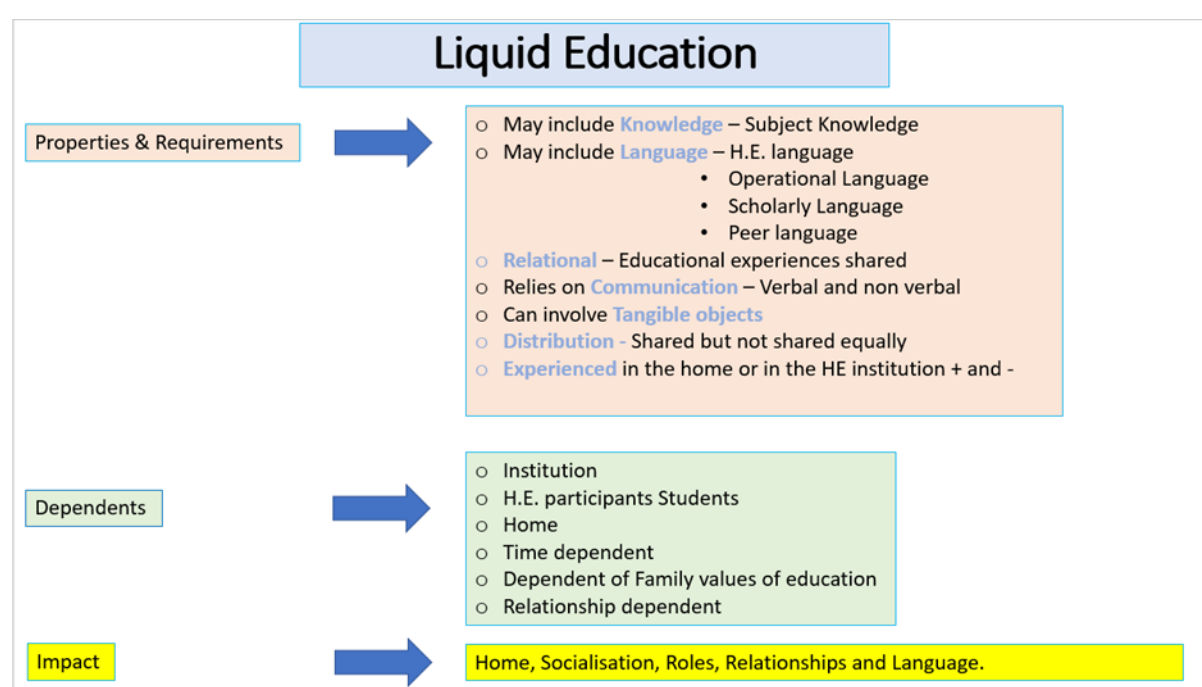


Fig 6. 9 Liquid Education

Language

The definition of language is based on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), who explain that language is not just a system of communication but is deeply intertwined in the fabric of social life. It is through language that people and societies construct, share, and maintain their realities, reinforcing the importance of language for the maintenance of reality. It is a means of socialization, as a tool for objectivation and it is a social product.

Phase 6 Producing the report This step in Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach was adapted to incorporate the fact that this was a multiple case study and that it was necessary to carry out a cross-case analysis using the themes as a framework for analysis (Miles, et al., 2014).

It was important to note that "the themes in a thematic analysis are not merely convenient for use in writing up the results of an interview study, but stand for something about the way the mind of the interviewees are organised" (Gomm, 2004, p. 196). This ultimately led to the experience of FGF in HE being illuminated and described, and organised in such a way as to gain an insight into the converging and diverging issues between the cases; all families were different, but there was a commonality of experience. The commonality of experiences across cases centered on the five key themes above (Table 12) and the data when read across the cases spoke directly to the themes and there was enough evidence from each family to support each of the themes. Post write up of the findings, certain decisions were made about what would go where. The research at this point honed in on the findings and associated themes which were best suited to answering the overarching research question, which had a collective focus: "What are the experiences of first-generation families with an intergenerational dyadic pair engaging in HE?" This then resulted in the identity, findings being incorporated into the family vignettes Chapter 7 to provide context; while noting the influence of the individual experiences on the collective. The collective thematic areas were pushed to the fore for discussion and the individual findings were merged into the family vignettes to provide context. This then resulted in firmly deciding on the following thematic areas: 1. Relationships; 2 Roles; 3 Educational Socialisation; 4. Liquid Education; 5. Language. Language was separated out from liquid education even though it is an example of a liquid education effect because it was important in light of the research findings and the importance placed on language in the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). I revisited multiple times the Braun and Clarke (2006) fifteen-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis (Appendix I) under the process of Transcription, coding, analysis, overall, and written report. After consideration, I was satisfied that the research analysis undertaken was "a good thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.96).

6.7 Establishing Trustworthiness

In conducting this research, I embraced the principles of trustworthiness and draw on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) to ground my research within the constructivist paradigm. To ensure credibility, I engaged with the participants for a long time to allow for a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004). This was also complimented by triangulation employing multiple methods and theoretical perspectives but focusing on the work of Berger and Luckmann as they provided the theoretical frame (Silverman, 2011). Triangulation was achieved in this research by employing various methods: educational Biographies, Interviews and family focus groups. These efforts were designed to present both an accurate and nuanced picture of the dyadic pairs engaging in HE.

According to Merriam (2002), researchers are advised to triangulate the data, which involves employing more than one method to improve the validity of the findings. The process of trustworthiness was woven through each stage of the research process to address the credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an example, in the individual interviews, topics that were spoken about were revisited in the family focus groups; this added to the credibility as it reconfirmed the knowledge that was presented at the interview stage by other family members and reaffirmed that my interpretation of the participant's responses were accurate (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

This research and, the research process, as previously discussed (Fig 6.1 Research Process) is a fully documented and rigorous piece of qualitative research in line with the work of Yin "multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (Yin 2009, p. 18). The process engaged with at thematic analysis stage, which was documented coherently to explain how the findings were formulated; the aim was to make this part of the research process transparent. The more positivist traditions address issues of reliability which show that if the research was repeated again similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). This is not necessarily relevant to this research because it was qualitative, dependent on the context and undertaken at specific time with a specific set of circumstances at both a micro and macro level. The process was documented in such a way that if someone did want to undertake the study again, they could do so.

There is a certain amount of transferability discussed in the findings chapter, which was based only on case-to-case transferability, and this transferability of findings across cases was made possible by the multiple-case design (Yin, 2009; Stake, 2006). As Miles and Huberman contemplate (1994), "Do these findings make sense beyond a specific case?" (p.173). Generalisability is possible, but what I have found is not necessarily generalisable to broader society. There were patterns of commonality between the FGF but whether these commonalities would be found in every family engaging in HE is unknown. This research was also generalizable to the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), which will be discussed in Chapter 10. If further research was carried out into this phenomenon and if the sample size increased and included more than one institution, the question of generalisability may be more applicable (Brooks, 2007).

Confirmability occurred during the research supervision process and by presenting a section of the research findings at an ESAI 2019 (Fig. 6.10) conference.

This was a very beneficial part of the research process, as my peers scrutinized the analysis and findings, and this feedback was incorporated into the research. The following section will examine reflexivity, power and ethical considerations for this research.



Fig 6. 10 ESAI Conference 2019

6.8 Reflexivity – Power and Ethical considerations

An ethical approach to the research and engaging overtly with ethics runs like a golden thread throughout the entire research process, consistently asking and engaging in an internal ethical conversation, keeping the participants and their interests and lives central to decisions and questions of ethics (Merrill, 1999) at each stage of the research process, from initial planning to the analysis and discussion. It goes beyond just discussing ethics in this section of the methodology; it also goes "beyond a brief discussion of the actions you have taken to preserve the anonymity and reference to the guidance you have followed" and to remain cognisant of the possible "unexpected ethical issues" placing the researcher in a position of "great moral responsibility" (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 30). The following 'Aspects to reflect on reflexivity' were consistently reviewed through the research process (Knott, et al 2022, p. 6).

Box 2 | Aspects to reflect on reflexively

For reflexive engagement, and understanding the power relations being co-constructed and (re)produced in interviews, it is necessary to reflect, at a minimum, on the following.

- Ethnicity, race and nationality, such as how does privilege stemming from race or nationality operate between the researcher, the participant and research context (for example, a researcher from a majority community may be interviewing a member of a minority community)
- Gender and sexuality, see above on ethnicity, race and nationality
- Social class, and in particular the issue of middle-class bias among researchers when formulating research and interview questions
- Economic security/precarity, see above on social class and thinking about the researcher's relative privilege and the source of biases that stem from this
- Educational experiences and privileges, see above
- Disciplinary biases, such as how the researcher's discipline/subfield usually approaches these questions, possibly normalizing certain assumptions that might be contested by participants and in the research context
- Political and social values
- Lived experiences and other dimensions of ourselves that affect and construct our identity as researchers

Table 13. Aspects to Reflect on Reflexivity (Knott, et al., 2022, p.6)

Atkins and Wallace (2012) suggest that when unanticipated ethical issues arise, they must be dealt with in a "situated and reflexive manner," and it is essential to "construct, apply and practice ethics in the context of your research" (p. 31). Ethics was practised constantly while researching with the participants and their families. This research employed "an ethics of care, to the extent that, even as strangers, we were able to empathize with the participants' stories of extreme poverty, discrimination, and injustice" (Webb, 2019, p. 536). During the research process, the work of Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) guided the ethical standards employed to uphold the integrity of the research. These included informed consent, privacy, harm and exploitation.

The participants were respected in their own right while acknowledging their autonomy to engage or withdraw at any stage of the research process. All attempts were made to minimise the perceived or real power imbalance between the researcher and the participant. This was achieved through transparency, building relationships with the participants, and ultimately gaining their trust (Negrin et al., 2022). My role as researcher and not as lecturer was clearly defined in the research information sheet, ethical consent form and verbally at the beginning of each stage of the research process. I was a lecturer in the institution where the research was carried out, I was an 'insider' to a certain degree and I went into the research process with my 'eyes wide open' (Asselin, 2003). I did not impart my understandings and interpretations in the data collection stages of the research to overshadow theirs, and my understanding was secondary to capturing theirs.

I adhered to Trinity's Policy on Good Research Practice and Section 7 Ethical Guidelines around conducting educational research in the school of education Handbook for postgraduate research, no incentives were offered to the participants and all participants were informed and volunteered to engage in the research. Fine et al., (2000) make explicit the sometimes-implicit aspect of informed consent, they go to the jugular of the issue and ask who is consenting and who is informing? To clarify this point raised by Fine et al., (2000), the participants were provided with a written document in advance of the research, which details all the aspects of the research, the aims and objectives and the overall research questions (Appendix E).

All researchers come to the research situation or process with value judgements, and the researcher's skill is to acknowledge the beliefs and judgements that we hold, and remain cognisant of them throughout the research process. It was very important to consider the work of Atkinson, (2004) in this regard, about the effect of my educational experiences as a FGS and its effect on the research process. On me as a researcher, but more importantly the emotions, revelations, and previous experiences of education disclosed by the participants.

As researchers, our own educational journeys sometimes resonated with those of our participants...Some narratives troubled, upset or angered us, particularly accounts of negligible parental support, breakdown of relationships with partners or peers, and poor educational experiences at the hands of teachers or institutions. Each of us were affected by stories of participants' 'strengths and triumphs', their 'quest' where they 'might have been broken', but were 'made whole again' (Atkinson, 2004, p. 568).

It was also necessary to consider as part of the research process and supported in the work of O'Shea, (2015) as she too is a FGS and mother, like I am, my position engaging with many of the experiences the mothers spoke of, being torn, caught, conflicted and guilty. I acknowledged my beliefs and judgments and I was aware of them consistently during the research process. These to a certain degree needed to be parked because they did not serve in answering the research question, but they did prove fruitful in creating an honest understanding of the participant's perspectives.

My positioning as a woman, a student, a staff member, a parent, a wife, and a daughter undoubtedly influenced what I "saw" within the data; I came to this study with certain preconceptions, some of which were subconsciously hidden. (O'Shea, 2015, p. 247).

My positioning did affect what I saw, but a constant returning to the research objectives and questions, a pursuit of knowledge shifted the focus continually from me to the participants, while realising we were in this research process together meeting 'in-between'.

I aimed to occupy the in-between space (Fleming, 2013). I had the linguistic tools to be able to shift to act out the professional role of researcher, my ability to speak 'their language', 'the student lingo'; "no big words" they would say to me in advance of the interviews. I myself had previously engaged in the socialisation process into HE, I fully understood their journeys as they explained them to me as FGS (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

In summary the five main strategies were employed to enhance the reflexive ethical aspect of the research. Firstly in Chapter 1 I explained the origins of the thesis and my motivations for conducting the research, these were also shared with the participants. Secondly I established trust with the participants and ensured I had their informed consent to participate in the research. Thirdly I engaged in constant self-reflection and believe that this is a skill I have honed throughout this research process. Fourthly I adhered to the ethical guidelines for research in TCD and gained ethical approval for the research in advance of conducting the research. I did re-submit the ethical approval documentation when the families agreed that the under 18 year old children could participate in the family focus groups. Finally I was in constant contact with the families checking with them if what I had understood by what they had said was what they meant.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the research philosophy, research design and the 4 stage research process. More specifically it documented a case study approach and the research methods; the process of establishing trustworthiness and the reflexivity involved in producing and engaging with the participants as a researcher. The theoretical lens was presented from a methodological perspective and to provide certainty around the theoretical fit for this research. The findings presented in Chapter 7, 8 and 9 were a product of a rigorous research process which resulted in five key themes emerging from the findings. These themes facilitated the discussion in Chapter 10 and opened up the framing of both liquid education effects and mycorrhizal role of the family. Various processes employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the research were discussed and the integral role that research ethics played from the outset of the research to its conclusion. The next Chapter 7 examines the findings from this research which will span three Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

CHAPTER 7 THE FINDINGS: FAMILY VIGNETTES

“Our texts must always return to and reflect the words persons speak as they attempt to give meaning and shape to the lives they have lived” (Denzin, 1989, p. 81).

7.1 Introduction

This chapter and the following chapters 8 and 9 provides a detailed exposition of the findings derived from the analysis of the data generated with the families. The findings from each family which have been grouped by theme and or sub-theme were discussed collectively to highlight both the individual family dynamics, the relational and the interconnecting crossovers between the families during their experiences of HE.

The raw unedited voices of the families are powerful and the aim of the findings chapters was to present them so that they speak to you the reader, so therefore I will defer a detailed analysis and theoretical application of the findings to the Discussion Chapter 10. While the narratives have been somewhat selected and cut from segments of conversations, their voices speak in their ‘own words’ because when “speech that has to be cleaned up to be more readable, loses important information” (Reissman, 1987, p. 189).

The family vignettes, Section 7.2 provide an insight into the identity, self of the participants and the context. “Framed by multiple voices, the following vignettes were “configured” to give unity and meaning to the data” (O’Shea, 2015b, p. 247). The vignettes incorporated the findings from the educational biographies and the information identified as individualistic experiences of the participants. The overarching research question for this thesis was a collective focus on how HE was experienced by FGF members and therefore it was not possible to present all the individualistic findings separately as part of the main findings due to the spatial limitations of the thesis. The family vignettes will follow and explore each of the five families and their members separately.

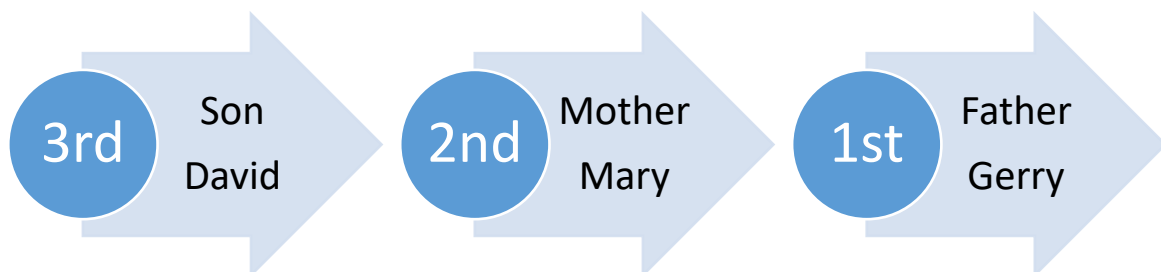
7.2 Family Vignettes

The five families are presented below separately, to provide context and to situate the findings from Chapters 8 and 9.

Family 1 - The Halligans

- Mary (Mother) Married in her 40s
- Gerry (Father) Married in his 40s
- David (Son in HE) 20 years old
- Kenneth (Son) 14 years old
- Sarah (Daughter in 5th class) 11yrs old
- Both Mary and David are in HE concurrently
- Both are in receipt of the SUSI Grant

Who went first to higher education in the family?



Mary (Mother) is married to Gerry (father) and there are three children in the family. Sarah is 11 years old, Kenneth is 14 years old and David is 19 years old.

Mary [mother in HE] has suffered from mental health difficulties following a bullying incident in her work years ago, she stayed off work on sick leave due to the stress. She made a difference in her children's school at policy and board of management level; this increased her self-belief and confidence, and ultimately motivated her to return to education (Denzin, 1989). It was very evident in the interviews with Mary that as part of the research process and her participation in HE that she was actively constructing her new identity 'I feel different now, I feel people see me differently now'

as a student (Britton & Baxter, 1999). Mary's first year in college she was diagnosed with an illness which meant that she attended first year for 3 months and then deferred the rest of the year. She came back to first year the following year to resume her studies. Mary completed her leaving certificate when she was 16 years old and was extremely nervous about returning to education. She had a difficult childhood with her family and used this experience as motivation to succeed in HE. Her father told her that putting her through college was a waste of money as she would just end up getting pregnant and have babies. She always valued education but got a job instead of going to HE after school. She explained that growing up there were many road blocks put in her way, her family were not supportive and in fact had a traumatic effect on her growing up (Gouthro, 2005). Her experience of not pursuing HE were in part also due to societal expectations of what a woman's role was in society (Charles & Kerr, 1988). She was the happiest at school as it was an escape from her family; those six hours in school she loved. Mary was estranged from her family and has no contact with them.

When she made the transition to HE the self-doubt terrified her, it was eating her up. The origins of it came from her experiences growing up in her family. It was not until she started to see how well she was doing in exams and assessments that her confidence grew. She had to learn how to learn and was "petrified". She thought, just learn off the slides but then realised "you have to understand them". She found the language in HE difficult and preferred it when things were explained in simple language.

I'd know the terminology but I always – the way I look at things is I've always looked at things this way, the Gettysburg address, I did that in school. The best speech ever written. And yet if you were to sit down and write it in your own words you'd probably use up ten pages writing what it's about. But the thing about it is it's simple language in it and I always think why use high flathulach [she explain this as complicated words] words, you know. If you speak in ordinary language that everybody can use, everybody can understand I think it's far better. I could use the high flauthulach language but I don't. They definitely use the high flathulach stuff here alright". (Family 1 Mother in HE)

She found group work very difficult and didn't like "the drama" and the clash of "personalities". She said the greatest barrier to her success in HE was "getting past her own head". Her HE experience has changed the way she communicates with people. She doesn't scream and shout, she takes a step back and formulates her arguments, she questions everything now and doesn't 'take things as they are', she believes she has more power now.

Her main motivation to attend HE is for her children to set an example for them so that they cannot turn to her and say 'you didn't do it so why should I'. She knows that because she has gone to HE

they will follow her and go as well. Mary got the SUSI grant by “the skin of her teeth” she believes that married people are sometimes forgotten about. She thinks the SUSI grant should take outgoings into consideration like mortgages and bills, She thinks it’s all politics, “we are all families...single parent, double parent, whatever”. Mary successfully completed her degree and is in employment now and is very happy she says it was all worth it, her confidence increased and she became visible (Webber, 2015).

David (Son in HE) completed the junior certificate and leaving certificate and he was enrolled on a level 8 degree in computing. He was in second year in college during the research process. His main motivation for getting an education was money. His motivation to succeed and his parent’s motivation are intertwined this propels him forward. He believes that you have to ‘stick it out or to grind it out’ then eventually you will get to where you need to be. His father was the most influential person in his decision to come to HE. (McCoy & Byrne, 2011; Pires & Chapin, 2022) He explained that his Dad had a great understanding of the STEM subjects and was a huge help to him explaining things to him visually with diagrams. A science teacher who was his ‘go to person’ in school for any questions about HE was also an influential person in his decision to attend HE. He didn’t like secondary school and repeated fifth year as he fell very far behind.

When David went to HE, he had a huge learning curve in that he realised that HE was his responsibility hence it was very different to school. He believed that this realisation made him more mature and responsible. He takes other people’s opinions into consideration before he makes a judgement. He had to learn how to learn, to shift from the way learning occurred in secondary school from “oh you just go to class and it’ll stick”. He had to learn a different way of learning, to break it down and pick out key verbs, keywords. He stated that “you have to know how to apply them”. He had become much more aware of the financial impact of HE on the family because they were not going on a family holiday that year. David’s self is slightly conflicted in that he thinks he knows who he is but he is still very influenced by the opinions and judgements of his parents and is still ‘second guessing’ himself. David got his confidence to continue and succeed in HE from performing well in his semester 2 exams of first year.

He only surrounds himself now with people who have the same life goals. His mother going to college had a huge impact on his younger siblings. He has a different relationship with his parents since starting HE, he thinks they respect him more and give him more space. He firmly believes that the life he will have after his degree will be worth all the hard work in HE.

Gerry (Father) He completed his intermediate-certificate and leaving certificate, he then served his time as a fitter and completed his apprenticeship as a Mechanical and Engineering Technician training with City and Guilds. He then studied advanced programming and he completed a cert in Mechanical engineering, then a FETAC level 7. He began a Masters in Business Management and has currently put this on hold as he got too busy in work but expects to go back next year to complete

it. He believes that if “you understand something you don’t have to learn it” and the key to exams is confidence and understanding. His mother had the greatest influence on his education.

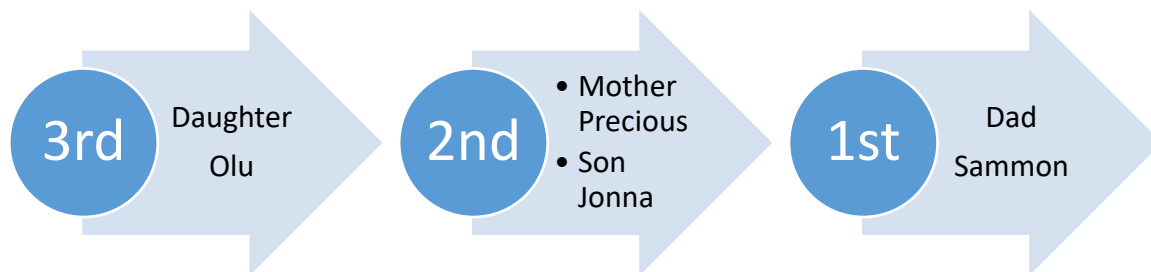
Kenneth (Son) is 14 years old and is in third year in secondary school. He loves school and history is his favourite subject. He wants to pursue civil engineering when he goes to college. At one point in his life, he wanted to be an artist. He seems effected by mothers return to education but not to the same degree as Sarah. His role in the house has changed and he does more to help, he considers himself more independent now and thinks that his mother’s return to education has positively affected him.

Sarah (Daughter) is 11 years old and is in 6th class. Sarah was visibly upset in the interview about her mother returning to education. Sarah wants to go to HE to be like the rest of her family. Her relationship with her brother Kenneth had become very close as they only had each other so they were forced to ‘get on’ because their mother and brother were in HE.

Family 2 – The Emugas

- Precious (Mother) 44 years old Married
- Sammon (Father) 45 years old
- Olu (Daughter) 18 Years old
- Jonna (Son) 20 Years Old
- Elede (Daughter) 13 Years old
- Both Precious and Olu are in HE concurrently.
- Both students are in receipt of the SUSI Grant

Who went first to higher education in the family?



Precious (Mother) came to live in Ireland from Africa 13 years ago. She has three children two born in Africa and one born in Ireland. She came to HE because she was volunteering and wanted to secure a job. Her sister was a great inspiration to her HE journey after she attended her graduation in America it gave her the impetus to proceed to, HE. She was brought up in a rural community in Nigeria and both of her parents were teachers with no HE qualifications. Primary school in her community was to learn about culture. She came to Ireland ahead of her husband with her two children and he stayed behind. Her main motivation to attend HE was to get a job and also ‘to be an improvement for her kids’ she explains that ‘if mummy is doing it’ then there is no reason why they won’t do it. Then he joined her 9 years later. She had become a celebrity to a certain degree within her community and is called on to host events because she is considered ‘smart’. She found that being part of a study group with her peers helped her immensely for things like referencing in first year which was “wrecking our head in first year”. She has struggled immensely while doing the Degree and running the home because in the African culture the female does everything.

When her husband arrived from Africa things had changed in the family in relation to roles and household duties. Her confidence had increased and she now believes in herself, she sees herself differently, is proud of her achievements. When Precious was in HE her son was in the same institution and her daughter was in a different HE institution. She has adapted well to HE as an African woman “Maybe that’s me personally if I go anywhere (in college) sometimes I find myself to be maybe the only African person there, but I kind of blend in”.

Olu (Daughter) - 18 years old is studying Humanities in a different institution. She completed the leaving certificate and came straight to HE. She believed that in secondary school you are put in a box with lots of peer pressure and cliques. In HE it is not like secondary school she believed that you are free to explore who you really are. “Secondary school is mindless, like sheep everyone follows everyone they all look and act the same”. She much prefers the independence of HE. She explains her transition to HE:

HE it’s kind of just – like it’s more like a level playing field. In secondary school they’d be on top of you for your work. In college if you don’t do it, that’s on you, you know. So I think that was a bit of a shock. You’re, like, thrown into a pool, like, and you just have to start swimming for yourself [in HE].

She gave a detailed example of the importance of her English teacher who gave her time and she made her ‘like English [as a subject] better’ and she wanted to do well in English for her. Her main motivation to go to HE was because life has become so competitive and you need a degree now to succeed. She really enjoyed primary school but she did not like secondary school especially when she started to do well, she was excluded by her peer group. She believed that if you go straight to work from school like some of her friends you get a pay check but ‘all the glitters is not gold’, they will not earn a lot as they get older ‘they will be stuck in a dead end job trying to pay bills’. She had to learn the best way to learn in HE, she developed a method that worked for her that “by saying it back to people... so if I can explain something I know it”. Her mum has been a great help in her transition to HE. She has a long commute every day to her HE institution. Her mother was her greatest influence to go on to HE. Her mother is understanding and kind about education but her father is very strict and expects her to do very well, so she feels pressure from her father.

Jonna (Son) (also in HE) He is 20 Years old and is in the same HE institution as his mother. He went straight from secondary school into HE. He went to England during the interview stage of the research. The family do not know where he is and had him registered as a missing person in the UK.

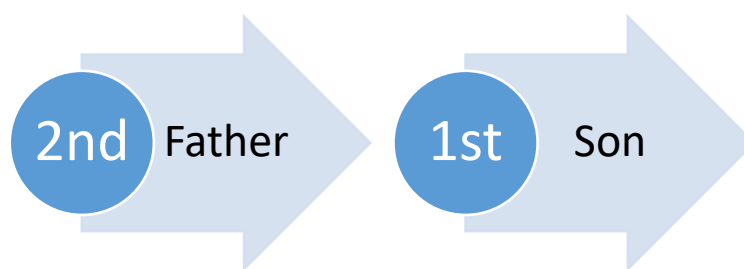
Edele (Daughter) is 13 years old and is in secondary school. She really likes education and cannot wait to go to HE like all her family members.

Sammon (Father) is 45 years old. He has a level 7 and is currently pursuing a level 8 degree. He is very competitive with his wife and wants to go one step ahead of her educationally.

Family 3 – The Latchfords

- Tommy (Father) 49 years old Single
- Ian (Son) 22 Years old
- Both Tommy and Ian are in HE concurrently
- Both students are in receipt of the SUSI Grant

Who went first to higher education in the family?



Ian (son) went to a further education institution to repeat the leaving cert. Then Tommy (father) went to the same further education institution to complete a FETAC level 5 in Psychology. Then Ian progressed to HE to complete a level 8 degree, then his father decided to go to the same HE institution to complete his degree also. Ian stated that the FETAC qualification gave him the confidence he needed to succeed in HE. Ian noticed his social class in the way he spoke differently than the other kids with an accent, and his address made him feel like ‘an outsider’ in school, it made him feel ‘a bit more working class’. Ian had completed his junior and leaving certificate. He repeated his leaving certificate in an FE institution. He completed year one and year two of HE and then he took a year out as he did not get on with his class mates. He returned to complete his degree the following year. After this year he viewed college and the world differently. He played the role of class clown in school and gained his identity through being involved in music in secondary school.

He was labelled as a ‘messer’ this followed him through his education career and in HE. This changed when he came back after his year out of HE, he took things seriously and found his own way of learning. When speaking with his friends about HE he feels:

I feel a bit stupid when I explain to them, like, what the course is and what we’re trying to do. And I tone down the language for them, so they understand like, sometimes I feel a bit caught” (he explained this in a social class way, caught between himself and the friends who have not participated in HE) (Son in HE Family 3)

He sources his information online and looks for practical examples of whatever he is studying. He doesn't like group work and believes that once it has been done in first year it shouldn't be done again 'group work is a nightmare to be honest'.

He was sent to 'a very good primary school' outside his catchment area in Dublin as his father wanted to give him the very best start in education. He felt like he fitted in better into the secondary school he went to but did not take the opportunity to do well and regrets that. He loves music and really wanted to pursue that as a career, but his father put too much pressure on him to pursue a career that would give him a wage instead of following the musical path, so he went to HE.

Ian and Tom's relationship had totally changed through the HE experience together. Ian disassociated with his friends who did not progress to HE. He believes that education can 'open doors', he really regrets not pursuing music fulltime. He came to education to better himself and also to make his Dad proud of him. He feels that he is now wiser from his experience in HE, he says he is like 'gandalf', he has 'got sensible' and he now 'looks at the bigger picture'. Following up with Ian he has now completed his Level 8 and is currently in a band.

Tommy (Father) Completed the inter-cert and the leaving cert he then returned to education several years later to complete a level 5 in psychology. He brought his son up on his own from when he was five years old. He has another son but he said 'he is away' he did not want to discuss this further. He sent his son to the best school in the area even though it was not the local school because he believed he would be mixing with the 'right crowd' and it would be the norm to attend HE. This came to fruition in that it was the norm for his son and his friends to attend HE.

Tommy had a car accident when he was 15 years old; and caused a brain injury. This experience sent him 'off the rails' as he stated. Before his accident he always wanted to be a teacher but this never happened. He got in trouble with the law, drank a lot and partied. He said at this point in his life he just didn't care about anything 'I just didn't give a f**k if I went to prison'. It wasn't until he became a father that he settled down at the age of 20, he says he had to 'step up' and be a Dad. He refers to his son as SON and not his name, he was very passionate about being a father and wanted to do the best for his son's future always.

He had guilt about certain decisions he had to make to provide for the two of them. He had kept a diary about his son from the age of six till he was 19 years old. He found that writing the diary meant he would never forget his boy's childhood and also he honed his writing skills which became useful for assignments but he really did "f**king hate computers". At the age of 20 he worked as a taxi driver until he had an epileptic fit a complication of the brain injury. One day while he was driving, he blacked out and crashed his car. The carriage office tried to take his taxi license away, but he fought it until they said he could drive the taxi and then after he got the approval to drive again his taxi license was up for renewal and he decided not to go ahead. Instead he went to speak with a local

guidance counsellor. He made the decision to go back and study at Level 5 where his son had repeated his leaving certificate. His FETAC course gave him a “good grounding” and he liked the small classes, the teachers were approachable and he built better relationships with them “teachers were kind of on the same level” in comparison to the lecturers in HE, this experience built his confidence.

Tommy being a taxi man he believes has given him the tools and skills to read and interact with people. He constantly drew on his experiences of being a taxi man to make sense of complicated theories studied in HE. Due to his increase in knowledge he never wanted people to feel less, because he knew more.

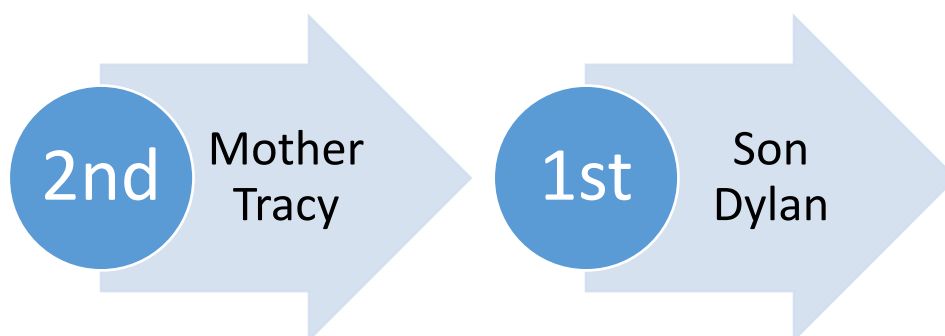
Like in the taxi if someone gets in, kind of like you know, “busy today? Horrible weather out?”, you’d know they want to have a yap ...I kind of feel ...I would hold back (with people who got into his taxi). Because That’s not cool, that’s not cool to make someone feel like crap because they don’t know something”.

His main motivation for attending HE was to prove to his son and parents that he ‘can do it’ and, to right the wrongs of the past. When he was in school, his parents would post his results up on the wall and show whomever came into the house. He also stated that he believed that he had no choice but to attend HE. The fact that he had been labelled by his peers as intelligent through the years made it easier for him to return to education, ‘your good at that sort of stuff, using your brain like’. Since the research was completed I followed up with him and he has completed his Level 8 Honours degree and has a very promising career ahead of him. He said that the SUSI grant meant he was able to come to HE.

Family 4 – The Greenes

- Tracy (Mother) 44 Years old
- Maurice (Father) 47 Years old
- Declan (Son) 11 Years old
- Colm (Son) 14 years old
- Ryan (Son) 17 Years old
- Dylan (Son) 22 Years old
- Tracy is in HE at the same time as her son Dylan.
- Both students are in receipt of the SUSI grant.

Who went first to higher education in the family?



Tracy (Mother in HE) completed her leaving certificate and then went to secretarial college. When she was in primary school her mother didn't send her to the local school in the town but to the rural school because it had less students and she would get a 'better education'. She met her husband and got married and stayed at home to raise her children. She had four boys at the time of interview they were 11, 14, 17, and 22. After having her boys she then went back and completed a FETAC Level 5 qualification. This course "helped a lot" and gave her the confidence she needed to go on to HE. She gained access to HE as a mature student applicant and was in receipt of a SUSI grant. Her main motivation for doing her degree was her son Colm (14 years old) is autistic and is non-verbal she wants to 'be there for him and to share the knowledge I learn in my degree with my family'. Going to college has given her a 'new lease of life' and she says that she can be herself. "Well I suppose now my status isn't just mother, homemaker, when I was renewing the car insurance it was, like, student and I thought 'oh will I put that down?'" She is now happy juggling both roles and sees herself as both mother and student. She wants to set an example for her boys, show people in the community and family, who may have doubted her ability to complete her degree.

She did grapple with her age as a mature student but she looked at it in a positive way and took the best from it

I just thought 'oh Jesus', you know, 'I'm such an owl here in comparison', you know, and I thought – it was good fun. I love the young ones, they're actually – and the young fellas as well, you'd have great fun.

When she was growing up her father worked in Wellington mines and they were known as Wellington mines children. Her father was the only breadwinner, due to the marriage bar her mother had to give up her civil service job after she got married. An example of her social class would have been that in her secondary school there were over 600 girls and only two of them had braces, she was one of them. She explained it was 'huge money back then' to get braces. She had her sons in different schools based on their ability and the subjects they wanted to study. She has tailored their education to suit them individually, which meant not sending them to the local school automatically. She had no regrets about attending HE and is delighted she took the leap, but couldn't do it without her husband's support.

Dylan is 22 years old. He is in HE and went first, then his mother began in HE. He completed his leaving cert and then went straight to HE. He is in receipt of a SUSI grant. He is the first in his immediate and extended family to attend HE. He changed schools in fourth year to go to a school that did more applied subjects which he was interested like mechanical drawing etc. his main motivation and influence on his education, his grandfather and his mother. He got his interest in mechanics from his grandfather as he taught him a lot about it. His grandfather wants him to 'be the best version of myself I can be'. He drives him on and helps him as much as he can. He hopes that when he completed HE, he will have "Better pay, cleaner work, I suppose a better future I suppose, better job." This comes from his grandfather and father telling him that he doesn't want to end up on building sites and this makes them both very proud that he will be using his brains rather than his hands. He found the transition to HE hard "I felt that – that change was kind of hard at the start. So you're kind of on your own" the realisation that it was all on him. It wasn't until second year that he became more motivated to get a career. He hadn't finished his HE at the time of the interviews and focus group but he had already been headhunted by a multinational company and this made him feel very confident, independent "I suppose, yeah, that – yeah, I am me own person and ...everything I do is to benefit – well, not to benefit me but ...it's up to me if I want to – what I want to achieve". He believes the sky is the limit when you have an education.

Maurice (the father) is a construction worker and his highest education was secondary school. His parents couldn't read or write. He engaged in a horticulture course in the same college that Tracy attended and completed a FETAC level 5. He was very interested in archaeology but never pursued it. He very much values the power of education and doesn't want his boys to pursue the same career as him.

Ryan aged 17 years old. He was in his final year of the Leaving cert applied.

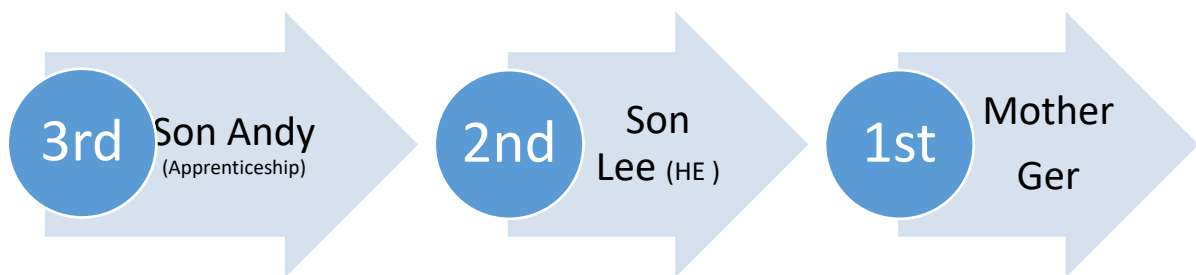
Colm is 14 years old. He attends a day service for people with intellectual disabilities. His parents pursued many avenues including setting up an ABA school in their home. He is nonverbal but engages fully in family activities.

Declan is 11 years old. He was in 3rd class.

Family 5- The Morgans

- Geraldine (Mother) 44 years old
- John (1st Partner) Father of two boys-(deceased)
- Michael (2nd Partner) 46 years old and Father to their two girls.
- Lee (Son in HE) 20 years old
- Andy (Son) 18 Years old
- Ella (Daughter) 12 Years old
- Joy (Daughter) 7 years old Joy
- Mother Geraldine in HE with Lee (son)
- Both students are in receipt of the SUSI Grant

Who went first to higher education in the family?



Geraldine (Mother) hated school and ‘mitched off’ all the time. Her father left school at ten and her mother did the intermediate certificate, got a job in an office but then she got married and due to the marriage bar she had to leave her job. Ger passed her leaving cert with very little effort and this frustrated her mother because she saw what she was capable of if she made an effort.

She worked in administration at a community project for 8 years and then lost her job. She went back to college to complete a FETAC level 5 course and then she got pregnant. Her main motivation to go to HE was to get a career not just to get a job, she wanted to get a profession and she was doing it for her children to give them a better life. She also wanted to make her parents proud

As a FGS Ger explained how she felt that she didn’t fit in social class wise when she lived in the flats and she used this as motivation to get out with her two boys. She felt that she didn’t belong in that social class and culture “I don’t belong here” she said. She explains the lived experience and the cultural differences based on social class around drinking, drugs, what they wore and how the other people in the flats communicated with each other by shouting.

Ger "Jesus Christ, sitting in an office, it used to drive me mad. And I stayed there seven or eight years for the money. Because obviously I was on me own, I'd two little boys and I was more interested in buying them designer clothes. And there's a year and a half between them and I wouldn't hand down Lee's to Andy, I'd throw them down the shoot in the flats, throw them out. Like, if I had that money now ...[laughs] Do you know what I mean, like ... living in Pine Street flats and going to Brown Thomas. Not that I – because I wasn't reared down there so I didn't mix down there [Pine street Flats] and I always knew 'I don't belong down there'.[in the flats] Because I'd hear 'Ma! Ma!' and of course they won't answer 'Phyllis!', calling their mother by the first time and I'm like [whispers] 'just go up the fucking stairs and knock on the door, she obviously can't hear you'. Everyone just bleedin shouting at each other. And that thing of the pyjamas! Go off into town with their trolleys and them silky pyjamas and I'd be, like, 'oh God'. I just – I never fitted in. I never let them [her two boys] out to play. They spent their – like, until I moved they spent their childhoods in the Johnson Park or at the Bramble Park. I just would not let them out. People probably thought 'she thinks she's something', you know, 'that she doesn't belong down here'. But I never felt I belonged down there. And even when I walk past now I get I get that shiver. I lived there for seven years, it's just a – ooh. Living in flats, well I just – and I know that's an awful thing to say but for me I just – if there's one thing in life I hope they never end up in flats like that. Literally that they can afford to buy their own little house and they, you know, whatever. It's just it's a different – like a different culture in the flats. It's like they have their own little culture, it's just – that That I had never experienced that growing up. My Dad loved a pint. Never had drink in the house. Now, I'm not saying that's right or wrong, that's the way I was reared. All of them in the flats don't go to the pub, they sit in their flats drinking and in summer they sit out of their flats, drinking, in deckchairs. They bring down their deckchairs from, you know ...and you're going, ah here like, 'go – jump on the Dart and go to Bray or go – don't sit here with your kids'. Now their kids are having kids and doing the exact same thing. But their kids are all on the coke, or the gear they're not on the drink. They're on – it's a different generation and a different generation of drugs even. It's just – I thought I'd never ... get out of there. That was the main thing when they were growing up. It was just ... that they didn't grow up in the flats. Ah you'd have a nice neighbor it wasn't even that, not that they're not nice people. I just didn't fit in and didn't want to fit in, if that makes sense. Didn't want to fit in". **(Family 5 Mother in HE)**

She explained in detail how her experience of FETAC prepared her for HE, but she noted the differences in expectation in FETAC versus Level 7 in HE. She dropped from getting 80%-90% to 50%, she couldn't understand this and the differing standards. Ger found that the language used in HE made her feel initially like she belong.

“No, I never actually Never [felt like she didn’t fit in],... Bar the big words [they made her feel like she didn’t fit in] – new words, I’m not going to say big words, new words that you’ve never needed to know before Or experienced them, yeah. ... but I’ve always felt like I fit in. Now maybe if I was in like [Elite University in Dublin] I might feel like ‘Jesus, I shouldn’t be here!’, but I’m not I’m here. **(Family 5 Mother in HE)**

Ger has a different way of learning that she developed in HE, she had not worked out how to learn previously. Her way of learning and completing work was different from her son in that she completes the assignment in advance and does not leave it to the last minute, he does and this frustrates her. She developed a very close peer group in HE and this group mediated the conflict of working in groups because she stayed in the same group with her peers so she didn’t want be like the other groups who “oh they’re killing each other”.

In her first year in college her youngest daughter was diagnosed with autism, her ex-partner the father of her two boys overdosed on heroin, her relationship broke down with her partner the father of her two daughters, she subsequently got back together with her partner [Michael]. In her third year in HE, her best friend in college (who was also a mature student) died of a massive heart attack. This became another motivation for her to finish her HE. Her experience in HE she compared to a tunnel:

I suppose it is what it is. ... it is what it is and sometimes when you’re in the middle of it it’s hard to see ... Like you can’t see through that tunnel to the light at the end”. Her greatest achievement to date is that “I’m still here.

She wanted to leave HE soo many times because of the guilt and the fact that she thought it wasn’t fair on her children or her partner. The experience has made her more confident, she deals with stress better and she doesn’t doubt herself as much.

Lee (son) was 20 years old, he completed the leaving certificate and then completed a post leaving cert (PLC) course. Knowing that he was accepted into the PLC before the leaving cert made him not care about the leaving cert. when he was put into the ‘smart class’ he was ridiculed by his friends because being smart and doing well was ‘not cool’ He wanted to be a teacher, then he had a conversation with his mum and she advised him to do her course. He always had an interest in addiction so he decided the course was a good option for him. His motivation to go to HE was his granny and mother they pushed him, his father (deceased) encouraged him also. All his friends are in apprenticeships. No one on his Dad’s side of the family went to school. He has ADHD, his mother put him on medication when he was five and since then he has been more stable and has a longer concentration span. When he was seeing a Counselor after the death of his father he convinced him to do a PLC. His father overdosed with heroin, he had addiction issues for many years. He is very proud of his family and where he is from.

Finishing school is his greatest achievement to date he is very proud of himself as he got in a lot of fights and was quite disruptive when he was in 4th class, he says if that had happened in 5th lass he would be “a gonner”. He had to learn how to learn and admits he only “studies the day before and exam”. It was very important to Lee to stay true to his social class and that he is proud of his family and where they are from, he doesn’t want to change his social class, because this is firmly embedded within his identity.

Lee spoke about experiencing his social class through the language they spoke in HE, he didn’t have access to it previously so he became frustrated and would say it was, like, ‘what are you speaking? Yeah. ‘Just speak normal’. Yeah. Seriously just talk normal, like. Jesus they would be going on and on in class.... And then I was sort of saying ‘do I actually belong here?’, because in the plc it was just – just ordinary people like me.

Michael (Father/Partner) was a taxi driver, and he found the transition of Geraldine going back to education very tough, he supported her financially. He was illiterate, both his parents are illiterate and he considers himself to be highly dyslexic. He did not think school was for him and he insists that all his children must go on to further/HE.

Ella (Daughter) is 12 years old and in 5th class. She loves school but is not sure what she wants to do when she goes to college. She cannot wait for her mum to finish college.

Joy (Daughter) was 7 years old and was in 1st class. She was diagnosed with Autism 2 years ago when Geraldine was in her first year at HE. Since her diagnosis, she has been doing much better and was getting the support she needs in school with an SNA. Joy did not react well to her mother attending HE and her behavior escalated. She was now doing very well in school.

Andy (Son) was 18 years old and he did not like school. His mother suggested to him that he go on a new apprenticeship course which could lead to a full apprenticeship. He completed the course and did so well a company sponsored him to complete the full apprenticeship.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the main findings explored within the vignettes of the five families. It gave an insight into the family structure, context and individual lived experiences in a summarised format. The next findings Chapter 8 will explore two themes from the findings; Relationships and Roles.

CHAPTER 8 FINDINGS: RELATIONSHIPS AND ROLES

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings under the thematic heading of Relationships and Roles. Section 8.2 examines the parent and child relationship, the parental relationship, mother and father's relationship with non-HE children, the sibling relationships, and relationships with peers. Section 8.3 focuses on roles and navigates through three key stages for the families during HE participation of Role conflict, Role re-negotiation and Role transformations.

8.2 Relationships

The overarching findings demonstrated that relationships in the family changed due to the HE participation of the intergenerational dyadic pairs.

8.2.1 The Relationship between the dyadic pairs

In each family the dyadic pair experienced HE concurrently which impacted on their relationship, this theme examines the dynamics in their relationship due to their shared participation.

Family 1

The relationship between Mary (Parent Student) and David (Adult Child Student) has changed. Mary does not feel she needs to 'mother him' while they are in college together. They have established a better communication process, a greater understanding and more compromises are reached. This also transferred to both parents as the son uses 'they' meaning both parents understand him now.

David "I prefer it now because there's an awful lot more interaction now. They understand me more now because she (his mother) is in college with me".

Both David and Mary attending the same college had benefits for both; it's cheaper and according to David, Mary gets some company. When I asked David about the sacrifices that he has made he explains them in the context of his mother's sacrifices, not specifically detailing his own. He suggests that his sacrifices "are like comparing apples and oranges" with his mother's sacrifices. His mother explains the economic sacrifices of attending HE for the whole family and that they had to accept socks for Christmas presents.

The pinch point times for this family leading to conflict was when assignments were due in and also at exam times. The father in family 1 played the role of peacekeeper between the dyad and he consistently put the conflict in context, to make sure that they didn't "eat one another alive". There was however 'murder' when things were not done in the house and it wasn't like it was before both students were in HE and this caused conflict.

David "I have a CA, she has a CA, both of us are a little bit stressed, nerves are a little bit frayed and then it's a ...Mmm. ... case of tensions get a little bit too high and it boils over and an argument or a screaming match breaks out and it's – my Dad referees it and it's a case of "look, both of yous are kind of doing stuff, both of yous are up to your eyeballs in work, just take a chill pill for ten minutes! Have a cup of tea, eat a bit of food!".

Family 2

Olu (Adult Child Student) thinks that her relationship with her mother (Parent Student) has changed due to their joint experience of HE. She considers her like a peer who is "on the same level". The joint experience has brought about a more egalitarian family in their view because of the dyadic pairs shared understanding of the difficulties of engaging in HE.

Olu "I feel like now we're more like peers. I'll say "okay, I have an exam. I have this, what did you get?" and then "how is this going for you?" and so sometimes we're not like parents and kids, we're just, like, all, like, on the same level because we're all, like, doing the same thing, like. So it's more like we kind of became friends more, like, than you know, parent and kids. Because now it's, like, we're all students. Like, it's not really like there's an authority because we're all, like, learning the same all going to college, waking up at 9 and going to lectures and stuff like that, you know. She now knows it's not that easy to be a student, like. **(Family 2 Student in HE)**

Family 3

Previously Tom (Parent Student) and Ian (Adult Child Student) were very close and the experience of HE brought them even closer together. Their relationship while they were at college was very well defined in that the father does not encroach on his son's space and he respects him more now. He would previously have put his son under pressure and "been on his case" but since the shared experience of HE, he trusts him more to complete his degree. Ian was very embarrassed when his father attended the same HE institution and claimed that he was following him as he went to the same FE provider before HE also. It took him some time to get accustomed to having his father in the same HE institution. Ian believes that he has done better in education since his Dad stopped

being “on his case”. Ian believes that having his father in HE is an extra kind of support, they can talk about their shared experience and the experience has brought them closer together. He gets a greater understanding of things from discussing them with his Dad.

Tom “I know you’re aware of pressure in a sense...I’m looming over you in a way. It’s father/son very clearly here in college...I kind of would have made a deal like that, “don’t worry, I’m not going to go to the canteen, sit down at your table: and like chat away to you and your mates and say things like ‘did he tell you about the time ...’. Our relationship would have- It’s always very close anyway, I suppose I kind of respect him more”

Ian “He was following me. Like, obviously it was a bit embarrassing at first for me when he came out...Because just the whole “oh your Dad’s here”, I dunno. I told a few yeah. And you put the head down! Once or twice, yeah. “there’s Sean’s, the square there with his Dad bringing him to college Uggh Just embarrassing and humiliated. Being the authority figure kind of, telling me what to do and “you should be doing this” and “this is the way you should be going about it” and now it’s kind of just, like, “you know what you’re doing and I trust you” we’re both going through the same thing like. Like, havin me Da here is like ...that’s an extra support kind of It’s brought us closer together than anything I’d say.”

Family 4

Tracy (Parent Student) and Dylan’s (Adult Child Student) concurrent experience in HE had transformed their relationship. There is greater understanding and Tracy is not ‘going as hard on him’ as she did previously because she is doing it now (being a student) and ‘it’s not easy’. Dylan appreciates that if he was struggling with work, his mother helped him when he felt the pressure and was comforted that the shared experience means his mother fully understands what he has been going through in HE, because she is experiencing the same difficulties.

Tracy “I have so much ...I have so much more admiration for Ryan now, I realise that the ...I might have given him a hard time for having to repeat exams and I realise now how it’s – it’s certainly not a walk in the park. ...now I’m doing it I’m ‘God, it’s not easy’.

Dylan “Yeah. Definitely, she put a lot of pressure on me to work hard and, say if grades weren’t as good as she expected, now she understands [laughs] how hard it is. The experience has brought us closer together, definitely. Like, say when I feel that I’m struggling with work, the fact that she can help me ...

Family 5

Ger (Parent Student) and Lee (Adult Child Student) are very close and they used comedy to navigate the conversations about their relationship but underneath they have a lot of respect for each other. Ger likes to 'wind him up' and calls him out on campus in front of his friends to diffuse the awkwardness. Ger uses competition between herself and her son to make him want to do well in his exams. During their first year on campus together due to the amount of time there and home it got "on top of their relationship" and Lee moved out and went to live with his grandmother. They worked things out and he moved back home. Lee loves the insights his mother gave him about expectations of lectures, topics and generally about the HE experience. She was his "guide" into the HE landscape she gave him "the heads up", this meant a lot to Lee.

Lee "Well let's say if I have a problem I'll just go to me Ma first as well, over everything, like. ..I need me Ma. We were always close but it definitely brought us even closer, like. Because, like, when I went she said 'you're going to love this lecture' and she was right,. ...Sort of gives you a heads up what to expect. And then she told me about the canteen ...often showing me a bit more things as well.

8.2.2 Parental relationship

Parental relationship as a theme examined the relationship between the parents, one parent is in HE while the other is not, this causes several dynamic shifts explained in the findings below.

Family 1

Mary (Parent Student) and Gerry's (Father non-HE) relationship suffered because Mary went back to college. She explained that he supported her but that when it came down to it, he was expecting her to do all that she had done in the past and go to college. She used the only power that she believed she had and she refused to have sex with her husband until he supported her return to college, in his actions. This transition, which was also a negotiation which will be further discussed under Role re-negotiation (8.3.2) took a year, for her husband to be fully onboard with the new domestic arrangements.

Mary "No. He fully supported me going back to college. He thought it was a great idea, but he didn't in his actions. Yeah. And that took about a year to change, you know. So I closed me legs for a year!".

The transition stage while they adjusted their relationship, it was rife with conflict due to the role adjustments.

Mary “I was like a single parent, Gerry was just an accessory. So we had, like, I’d come home from college maybe half six/seven in the evening and he still wasn’t home from work, no dinner made, place is in bits and there was umpteen rows. But now this year things have changed, he’s [Gerry] more settled in the job, things are kind of sorting themselves out a bit and he does come home now if I have a CA [continuous assessment] to do he’ll just get in and do the dinner and leave me on the laptop. But that transition is really hard because for the first year in college I think we killed each other probably for most of the year, you know?”

Mary’s acquisition of knowledge and her use of new language had an impact on her relationship with her husband. This also gave rise to a shift in the power dynamic in their relationship, to quote her husband “the tables have turned”.

Mary Like, Gerry’s boss – I don’t like his boss and I come home and I’ll say, like, he’s cognitively deficient. And he.(Husband)..... he’ll look at that and he’ll fall around the place laughing and he’ll say ‘oh my God!’ and then I’ll go in and say, like, something else like – what was the – the Japanese thing I said to you? What was it? Karōshi. I said ‘Karōshi, that’s what he is’, I said. He’s not only a, what do you call it, a bourgeoisie but he’s doing that as well. And he’s looking at me, going – and then I get into a big long explanation and he’s, like, ‘okay then. I must remember all that!’.

Gerry “I’m kind of saying something similar to – not a full-blown argument but a discussion about something. Mary’s reference points are, like, I would never have heard of before and so I would say she’s won maybe one or two more arguments and discussions than she would have before. Before I could kind of argue around and quote this and that throw in the odd big word here and there and Mary’s thing would be ‘I’m not going to discuss it anymore’ and then that would be kind of a defense mechanism from her meaning like ‘I kind of don’t understand what you’re after saying, so I’m just going to leave it there’. Now, (since Mary attending HE) it’s a case of ‘well, actually you’re wrong and the reason why you’re wrong is because the study in 2004 with blah, blah, showed that the majority of the people ...’ and I’m now getting to the point where the tables have turned”.

This change in power due to the knowledge attained in HE is having an influence on the children, they were noticing the difference within the family home in their parent’s relationship. This is an example of an increase in knowledge in one person within the family and this knowledge attainment changing the relationship dynamics.

Gerry “We have the kids then saying and kind of looking at each other and going ‘we are in the right house aren’t we?’”

Family 5

Ger's (Parent Student) and Michael's (Father Non-HE) relationship was under a significant amount of pressure in year one of HE. For Ger, the conflict was so bad that they broke up, they subsequently worked things out and got back together. She viewed HE as something that she was doing for herself because she had been so selfless her whole life. When the pressure of money grew, the extended family stepped in and helped so that her partner could work longer hours and make more money. It took about three months for Michael to support her and then he began to encourage her anytime she had a 'blip'.

Ger "Yeah. First year. We were literally at loggerheads. I didn't think we were going to get through, because ... I didn't realise how hard it was going to be for him [Michael]. I really didn't, you know, I just thought it was only going to be hard for me. And I was kind of being a bit selfish because 'it's always been, well everything's always for them, I never do anything for me. So, this is for me'. But I just didn't realise how much of an impact it had on them. Even in first year, the two of us split up.

8.2.3 Mothers and Father's relationship with non-HE children

This theme examined the relationship between the parent in HE and the parent not attending HE and how their relationships have altered with their children who are not attending HE.

Family 1

Mary's (Parent Student) relationship with her non-HE younger children since her return to HE had altered. Kenneth's (Non- HE Child) relationship with his Mum had changed as she worked more and does not have as much time to spend with him. He had a clear understanding of the pressure that she was under but he was uncomfortable with it and he doesn't ask her for anything, he says he "can't be distracting her".

Kenneth "She definitely works a lot more, you know, I've – I've never seen mum that under pressure that often. Yeah, so seeing her like that, you know, take a step back and not ask her for anything. It – you know what, I don't like it. I don't like to see my mother under pressure, but at the same time I know why she is under pressure. She has work to do and – and I can't be distracting her with anything else because she has work to do".

Sarah's (Non-HE Child) relationship with her mother had changed. This was a very difficult part of the interview for both Sarah and her mother, When she spoke she looked at her mother with tears in her eyes, she used the focus group to tell her mother how she had been feeling.

Sarah “It has changed [her relationship with her mother], I feel like I barely get to talk to mam anymore because she has so much work or she has to do this for college, do that for college. So it’s kind of – I can’t really talk to her because she’s just swamped with work. And sometimes she’s under pressure, yes, and I don’t like to see that either but I just have to live with it and try to help mam” [Daughter cries]

Sarah’s sadness was palpable as she explained this in the interview and looked directly at her mother while responding to this question.

Sarah “I wouldn’t be used to her not, like, dropping me to school and being there when–when, like, some mornings she had to go to college earlier or, like, sometimes when I’d come home she wasn’t there. [long pause] So it was kind of unusual for me in a way... I was really sad that she wouldn’t drop me to school ...”.

Mary explains how she lets her daughter help her with her HE “when I’m making the poster...Sarah would help me”. This had a positive impact on the mother and daughter relationship. David (Adult Child Student) explains that his mother attending HE has had an impact on his younger siblings; he explains this impact in the family focus group.

David “And that would have meant that there would have been an awful lot of late nights where she wouldn’t have come home until six o’clock, seven o’clock in the evening because she wasn’t off till half five/six. So, my sister would have to walk home on her own and she’d come home to an empty house because I wouldn’t be home till late because of being in sixth year, I wouldn’t be off till four o’clock, she’d be off at three, so there’d be an hour between her and me coming home. My Dad wouldn’t be home till half five. So there’d be time there where it would literally just be her on her own [his sister] in the house ... So, they’re an awful lot more independent of my mother and father, an awful lot more mature for their age”.

Kenneth acknowledged that he had to adapt “to grow because there’s an absence of a parent”.

Family 2

Precious (Parent Student) has found that the course content had changed the way she communicated with her children.

Precious “The teenage years was very, very hard but I’d have done certain things differently now. With my knowledge, with my –the psychology and everything. So that has really helped “oh, don’t shout no I don’t want this!” you do a lot of dialogue rather than shouting.”

Family 4

Tracy (Parent Student) shared her HE experience with her children and they respond by being interested in her HE experience and this has affected her relationship with them they feel involved. In the family focus group Declan (Non-HE Child) and his mum were very close he sat on her knee and spoke directly to her and explained that he missed her.

Tracy “Oh yeah, sure showing them [Ryan and Maurice] photographs and everything of what’s going on . I’d show things to the two boys there for, like, shag week and the big thing that was goin on, its definitely brought us closer together when I show them stuff”.

Maurice (Father Non-HE) “ And impressed...Probably sound bad, but ...I have to be honest... at your age going to college! At your age going to college! An owl was going to college!

Declan (11 Years old) “Because – because I missed her. She’s gone every day. Well not every day ...but a lot.

Although Declan does note that “Im actually happy that dad is at home...Dad wants to play with me now”. His relationship with his father has changed in that they play with each other now on the PlayStation. His Dad explains that the relationship between Declan and him is different now “Just you can’t get your own way anymore”.

Four of five families noted through their conversations and the discussion around roles in the family that their experience of their parent and sibling in HE meant that they depended more on their father, for food or going to the dentist. This increased time spent with their father was not specifically named by the children but it was happening as a result of the situation.

8.2.4 Sibling relationships

Non-HE students’ sibling relationship

The theme of sibling relationship sub theme captured the dynamics and changes that occurred between the Non-HE and HE siblings, due to the dyadic pairs engaging in HE.

Family 1

The experience of their mother and brother in HE meant that Kenneth and Sarah relied on each other more and this experience brought them closer together.

Kenneth “They have definitely – I talk to her more often.

Sarah Kenneth – Kenneth is forced to speak to me more.

Kenneth Like, if – we’re going back years now, there used to be very bitter rivalry me and her ... and now it’s sort of eased over, you know, there’s still hiccups but, you know, we still – we talk more we have to, there is no one else at home”.

8.2.5 Peer relationships

The peer relationships theme examined the impact of the HE experience on the peers of the dyadic pairs.

Parent student relationship with peers

Family 2

Precious (Parent Student) had to change her circle of friends because her old friends became ‘enemies’ and from her perspective were not contributing to her goal of HE. Due to her increased knowledge they perceived her as somehow better than them. She made new friends and moved on.

Precious “oh because she’s going to college now she thinks she’s on top of the world better than us” and they just forget about you. Life goes on, you make new friends and that’s it”

Family 3

Tom (Parent Student) found that having intelligent conversations with another friend who had been to college excited him but that because his friend did not go on in HE the conversations kind of stalled at a certain level. He had a group of golf friends for 20 years and since coming to HE, he hopes the phone doesn’t ring’, he has moved on from that’ his old friends and also moved towards the individual sport of running.

Tom “There was probably a support process [between him and his good friend] where there was a I can’t believe this and that. We had some intelligent conversations and I enjoyed them. Now, not so much I suppose because everything that I learned in the first year, now it’s a kind of an extension to those conversations. I kind of lost touch with the golfing friends... There’s one lad I go out with now all the time, I kind of half hope the phone doesn’t ring or, you know, whereas the running, like, I got back and did the marathon this year .So I would have moved kind of from the group, you know, we would have been for 20 years always played golf together ... And that’s kind of – I moved on from that.

Family 5

Ger (Parent Student) doesn’t have very many friends and her one friend is now in HE also and began after she did therefore they don’t have as much time to spend with each other, both have their own

lives and are very busy. Ger had a positive impact on her friend attending HE, she had supported her through this and her friend has subsequently succeeded in HE.

Ger “I don’t have many friends. I have one really, really – she’s me best friend since we were 18 and then other girls would be just ...Yeah, acquaintances kind of... friends, you know. But, like, Grace is doing her degree part-time. So I don’t really see her as much anymore since she started her degree last year because obviously she works fulltime and then she has her own life– and she’s busy ...**(Family 5 Mother in HE)**

Adult child student relationship with peers

Family 1

David (Adult Child Student) has changed his extended group of friends who were not attending HE because he wants to surround himself with people who have the same life goals as him, to be successful, he doesn’t want to end up on the dole.

David “My core – my core group of friends hasn’t changed much, like, we’re all in college.. My kind of – my extended group of friends, I would say, yes, that is has changed. That a few of them have been kind of “oh what are you going to college for? You can just – you can work and you can come out with us all the time”. I’ve been a bit harsh with – I’ve cut ties with them because I don’t want to surround myself with people that don’t want to get anywhere in life. Because I’d rather surround myself with people that I think are going to be successful ...and are going to get somewhere, like, I know it sounds horrible ...but, like, I don’t want to sit around on the dole and waste me life away”.

Family 3

Ian (Adult Child Student) spoke at length about his friends. He had different groups of friends in primary school. In secondary school he was friends with a group based on his shared interest of music. The pressure he felt due to all his friends (bar one or two) attending HE was as he explains positive peer pressure. He had to repeat the leaving cert because he didn’t want to be left behind. He looked at his friend who was not attending HE differently and believed that attending college gave him social status among his peers. He thought that ‘education gives you something to look forward to in life instead of being stuck in a dead- end job’ he perceives himself as ‘more clever’ than his friends who did not attend HE.

Ian “No, my friends, like my group of friends. Like ...that I have had since school [Secondary school]. I just felt awkward, like say, socially kind of left out or something if I didn’t go to college, because they were all going. Like, I think there’s one, like, one of my friends isn’t going and stuff and I think he feels a bit awkward and even if we bring up college and start talking about it because he’s, like, fulltime at the bar so, like ...peer pressure to attend college...

Ian’s relationship with his friends encouraged him to proceed to HE. Sometimes the presumption about students from lower socio-economic classes was that they will be met by resistance from their peers but this was not the case with Ian. His father had done a lot of work in the background making sure he went to a particular school so that he would be surrounded by a certain type of peer group. Ian in order to gain the social status among his peers felt pressure to pursue HE.

Family 4

Dylan (Adult Child Student) doesn’t really see his friends anymore he is happy with his new friends in HE, even though he has not known them for a long time, he considered them real friends, because they were “likeminded”.

Family 5

Out of 13 of Lee’s (Adult Child Student) friends only two of them went on to HE. He experienced negative peer pressure about attending HE and they put him under pressure to get an apprenticeship. He pushed back, he didn’t want to be hurting his ‘back when he was 50’.

Lee “So I think that took me a while to work the friends thing out like– because I mean looking at all me friends everyone went and did apprenticeships. Every one of them. They’re all doing electricians, mechanics, carpentry and the rest. There’s two of us. There was another one in my class, he hangs around with me now and he’s doing law in Luttrells College. The rest all – apprenticeships, so they’re always saying to me ‘Why would you go to education, like? You can earn money and then in a few years time you’ll be on €21 an hour’. I was, like, I don’t want to do that, like. When you’re 50 and hurting your back and all.

8.3 Roles

The findings in this section show that when a family member entered higher education, the roles within each household shifted in noticeable ways, though the extent of these changes differed across the five families. The analysis points to three linked sub-themes: role conflict, role re-negotiation and role transformation. At the outset, all families encountered strain as long-standing routines were unsettled and tasks that had been taken for granted had to be shared out differently. This period often brought feelings of guilt, frustration and pressure, particularly for the parent-students who found themselves trying to meet academic demands while still carrying expectations associated with their role in the home. As time went on, families began to work through these tensions and gradually adjusted how responsibilities were managed. This ongoing negotiation created space for more lasting changes in how roles were interpreted and taken up. Although these shifts also influenced relationships, the emphasis here is on how day-to-day roles within the household were altered and how families adapted to these changes during the period of HE participation.

Relationships were also affected by the changes in roles but if the effect was on the relationship this was placed under the relationship theme, if the impact was predominately felt on roles within the family then it was placed in this section.

8.3.1 Role Conflict Stage 1

All families experienced various forms of conflict, some of the specific references below are examples of conflict specifically relating to roles within the family.

Family 1

Getting home from work on time was important for Gerry (Father Non-HE) because this meant that everyone would be fed at the right time and there would be less conflict and arguments, otherwise he would feel guilty. He saw feeding the family now as his role when previously this role would have belonged to Mary (Parent Student). The communication between the husband and wife improved because Mary 'wanted to kill' Gerry for the first year. They work through issues now and there is a better level of understanding.

Gerry "Make sure I get out of work at a reasonable time so I can take the pressure off Mary of the rush home to get – there was that kind of thing where, especially when I was working late, the – the kind of guilt situation that you [Mary] mentioned, you were trying to refocus yourself to say 'okay, okay that's a bad day today, hopefully that'll be the end of it. Get out of

work at five o'clock, be home at ten past five, have the dinner on and have everybody fed and watered by six o'clock'. The reality of it is it doesn't happen like that and the consequence of the guilt end of things, there was, and still is to a certain point guilt felt by me- but I think with the communication now between myself and Mary getting better ... not that we were extremely bad ..."

Mary throughout her individual interviews was tormented by guilt because of the decision she had made to return to education. Mary felt guilty that the "dinners weren't made", that they (her children) were "on their own in the house" and that someone else was doing her role.

Mary "He would have had to walk home with her(daughter) and let themselves in the door ... and I think that was hard for me. And I think it was kind of hard for Gerry as well because we're not well off, we just couldn't afford childcare, so it was tough. And then when he [Kenneth] went on to secondary, like, he's in secondary three years now, so she was 9 and she was coming home on her own...Ughh the guilt... Because I always felt if I stopped, I'd never go back, you know, so...The worst part about it was guilt that the dinner isn't made, guilt because they're walking home on their own, you know. And, like, I'm not there for them anymore because Mammy Taxi was always around and suddenly Mammy Taxi was gone".

Then she also had to make the transition to someone else doing the things that she did previously and seeing someone else take on her role, this even made Mary feel guilty.

Mary "...normally I'd have to be the one to go down to it but Gerry is doing all of that now, you know? And it's kind of weird in a way because sometimes I feel a bit guilty that I'm not going with her (to the dentist) that something else is taking time away, you know, so it's very blurred".

Family 5

When Ger (Parent Student) comes home and sees that someone else has not taken on the role which she was carrying out prior to her attending HE it leads to conflict with Michael (Father Non-HE) and Lee (Adult Child Student). The first year was the worst for the family:

Lee "Me Ma'd say 'I do everything' and me Ma'd come in and she'd see the house in bits and ... everything just goes sky high and then she's giving out to us and then we're fighting back and - ah, I don't know how people slept in the house ...that first year.

Ger "There was a few moments you're worrying about things that you shouldn't be worrying about. You know what I mean, like, I shouldn't be worrying about whether he's after taking

the clothes out of the machine. I should just be in college be sitting there thinking 'I'll get through this lecture now and I've one more left and then I'm gone', whereas I'd be thinking – sitting 'I wonder if the dishes washed, even dinner?', you know? So, I shouldn't have been ... in that mind frame but I was. So the first year was just really – probably a lot was my own fault my mind would be wandering off".

Ger felt the guilt extremely difficult to deal with and found it hard to switch off from home when she was in college. This was mainly in part due to the fact that her daughter was diagnosed with autism and this was just as she started school and Ger started college and it took her a year to settle in but this made Ger constantly on edge expecting the phone to ring with a problem.

Ger I'd be sitting there going 'oh God, should I be doing this' and then I'd be checking my phone, do you what I mean and you're taking your phone out in lectures and you miss calls... That was a big, like, I was really guilty".

Michael was more pragmatic and referred to the finances of the house and how they effected what the family members could buy or do. He also found it difficult when he had to collect his youngest daughter but now his extended family helps and this has taken some of the pressure off him. The first year was the most difficult for Michael, he seems to be ok with how things are now 'the new normal'.

Michael "Yeah [the first year was the hardest]. Ah, it's getting a bit easier. Now – first year was harder when I was collecting Joy and it was more to do with money as well, it was, because you weren't working as much. ... but now it's a bit more easier since my Ma's collecting her, isn't it? I can work a bit longer and get the money that you need, but the first year was hard, yeah. Doing it all ourselves and money was just a big problem, wasn't it? The first year? That was the – the killer, now it's still mental but it's grand more normal now".

Food

Food was a cause of intense reoccurring role conflict within the families which was identified in the individual interviews, educational biographies and particularly in the family focus groups. All members of the families returned to the theme of food on numerous occasions throughout the family focus groups. This highlights the role and importance of food in the family because a disruption to the norms around food gave rise to immense conflict in the home. The transition the family made around food, the time of food being ready, the type of food being cooked and who cooks it was a dominant sub-theme of roles for four of the families. Dinner was a family ritual, meal times brought everyone together and all families expressed this. I have selected the two most poignant examples here.

Family 1

One area of conflict was around the dinner and associated guilt with the mother's (Mary) perceived role that it was her responsibility to provide the food on time for her family. It took her husband (Gerry) time to get organised and realise the importance of his new role around food preparation and cooking. Everyone was depending on him to be home on time and make the dinner.

Gerry "There was quite.... A lot of conflict to be honest"... (Family 1 Father not in HE)

Mary "Because you'd be getting dinners ready at eight o'clock in the evening, do you know? ...worst part about it was guilt that the dinner isn't made (Family 1 Mother in HE)

Gerry "... that's a terrible time to be eating dinner at, you know".

Gerry "And if – I'll be honest there has been times where Mary's said to me 'I'm going to be late home this evening, so you don't be late home and make sure you get home at a reasonable time so as that dinner's started, blah' and I'd end up – there'd be carnage in work and I'd have to stay there and I'd constantly kind of going 'sorry guys, I have to go, I have to go' and then something else will pop up and when I drive into the driveway and I see her car there before mine it's like 'oh my God, here we go!'".

Family 5

There was a lot of conflict in family 5 around food. This was particularly evident from the children's perspective, notably Ella (Child Non-HE) who was 12 years old. It was one area of her mother engaging in HE that she really didn't like, her father's cooking and this made her miss her mother more. Historically in the family there was a routine around food and the time the food was ready. Her daughter had tears in her eyes when I asked her what was the most difficult thing about her mother returning to HE, when she stated the dinner, she really meant it.

Lee "Yeah, you realise –I just keep going back to the dinners, like, every time you come in from school they'd be done. (before his mother attended HE). So, if I finished school at, like, half three, it depends, 3.45 people are home at half four the dinner was already made, ready to go. But now ...You'd be waiting. Ah, it was all over the place the first year there was just nothing but fights because me Ma's fella, Michael, he didn't know how to cook or anything, so me Ma was coming in at, what, six o'clock/seven o'clock and he had to cook the dinners then. Just fighting, like, he'd go out and me Ma stayed in and Ma used to work part-time. And, like, when she lost her job she'd always be cleaning the house, making dinners, everything'd be done before we came home. So, when she was gone, ah it was just horrible and then me little sister, she's has to do her homework because he (her Dad) can't even read. But we're slowly getting used to it and thank God she's (His Mum) in her last year now...so much conflict man.

Ella “Things changed at home because me Da started cooking! He’s not really that good at cooking. All he really makes is pasta and chicken, that’s all he knows how to cook, I’ve had enough of it now.

The next section will examine the role re-negotiation Stage 2 which was discussed by the families as they navigated new roles due to HE participation.

8.3.2 Role Re-Negotiation Stage 2

The families explained in four cases that they had engaged in a role re-negotiation process in order to facilitate the dyadic pairs in HE. In the previous theme of relationships under 8.2.2 parental relationship there are various overlaps with role re-negotiation because for many of the families the negotiation happened between the mother and father and their relationship also went through a re-negotiation stage.

Family 1

Mary’s role in the family home had been taken for granted by the family members before she went back to study, the work she had done previously in the home had been ‘invisible’ to them. Mary experienced a lot of guilt in relation to her role as mother within the home, when she returned to HE. Her children walking home on their own to an empty house was difficult for her. Trying to juggle the role of student and mother ‘it clouds in on top of you’.

Gerry “So, that kind of level of taken for granted was huge. And it was more because of the amount of stuff that Mary did that wasn’t realised it was done until that end of things stopped and the mountain of clothes rivalled the EU butter mountain!”

Gerry links Mary going back to college firmly within her role as mother of the family and her duties associated with this role.

Gerry “I knew it was going to be hard, like, long hours and situations of coming home late and Mary coming home late and having to feed the starving millions, it kind of puts a bit of pressure on you. But regardless of that I was 100% behind her”.

Mary “Yeah. But I think for me, though, the worst part about it was guilt that the dinner isn’t made, guilt because they’re walking home on their own, you know. And, like, I’m not there for them anymore

8.3.3 Role Transformations Stage 3

Family 1

As Gerry (Father-Non HE) took on more roles in the family and Mary (Student Parent) delegated her previous role to the other family members this took some time for the family to adjust to. David (Adult Child Student) has become more aware of the role he can play in alleviating some of his mother's stress and he helps more now around the house, he even cooks the dinner. Things have changed now and everyone pitches in now more.

Gerry "Yeah, that's it. One of the things, you know, is this is reality. It's not some show that stops at five o'clock and goes 'okay, everyone go home'. This continues, this – those piles of clothes will sit there until somebody puts them in the washing machine. And those dishes are going to stay in the dishwasher until somebody takes them out, whereas that's what Mammy's job was. Now it's not her job anymore, now she has this thing of 'no, you're big enough and bold enough. I have work to do for college, empty the dishwasher, then Hoover and whatever'".

Mary "Without a shadow of a doubt, things are getting better because it's not healthy for – I don't think – for a woman to be, like, the mammy role all the time ...Mmm. ... do you know, so things are much better now because I feel like if things are getting on top of me, he [her husband Gerry] understands now".

Mary "Yeah, I think Gerry got very used to me doing everything ... what do you call it, and he didn't realise, like, it wasn't that he did it purposely or anything. It was just, like, he'd come in in the evening, the dinner would be ready, do you know? Everything would be cleaned, kind of thing Do you know? He sees that now. Do you know that kind of way? Like he understands"

Family 4

In order for the family to make the transition to the dyadic pair being in HE the mother (Tracy) had to make herself unavailable. The roles within the house changes and her husband took on the majority of them, of which she is very grateful. From the children's perspective (Dylan and Ryan) both parents do everything, Tracy believes there is more role symmetry now. One of the children not attending HE explains that there is more pressure on his Dad (Maurice) now because of the fact that his mum and brother are in HE. Maurice the Dad believes that his role is to keep the kids away from Tracy the mum in order for her to be able to complete her assignments or study.

Tracy "I think there's more role symmetry now. I come home here and it's great but there's laundry and that ... Backing up. There's a lot of people in this house. I suppose I'm – I'll – I've

made myself unavailable really. I'm not available 24/7 like I used to be, just not being here. I suppose that is the difference" I'm very lucky that I come home and the dinner is cooked. I've definitely taken more of a backseat with – obviously I'm not around to bring the boys to school and collect them, so definitely my role has changed. Definitely. And Maurice is – is doing what – is doing so much ...More.... I wouldn't be able to do it, actually...without him being on-board ...and giving me the chance to do this.

Dylan "Mum went back to college and Dad realised he had to do something around the house! Like, there wouldn't be one-sided, like, they both do everything, like, mam cooks, dad cooks. There's no role differences.

Ryan "I suppose yeah, it's a lot more pressure on Dad."

Maurice (Father) Well, that's – I know when she's studying for exams and stuff, I just keep the boys away from her and stuff, stay the hell away. Out of the way! Out of the way! Oh yeah, bring her up cups of coffee and tea.

Family 5

Ger explains below that roles within the house have changed and that her family had gotten used to her doing everything but this had to change. She didn't realise that HE was going to affect her family so much she thought it would just affect her, she was wrong. She had to get used to her previous role as mother had changed, this was a transition that happened over the period of a year her fear of things not being at her same high standards had changed. Her partner Michael does more in the house now and this has taken the pressure off Ger.

Ger "It was a big deal, so when you go home and somebody, like, doesn't change the toilet roll holder and you lose the reason over that, then you know 'alright, hold on', you know like, 'something has to give here'. The fact that I'm still here is – I didn't think I would be. I was at home. Fulltime. For a few years, so they all got used to me being at home and then because you're there all day and you don't ask anyone to pick up their own socks because it's easier for you to do it and you don't want to have an argument with teenage boys and – so I did everything and then that changed. I suppose even with Michael, like, he'd lose it every now and then because of money and this and that and he couldn't cope because he'd to work and do a dinner, right? And like if I put a wash on in the morning – 'well, if you don't text and say there's a wash there how am I suppose to know?', 'check the washing machine! Check it! Because then when I come home I have to wash it all over again', you know, so ...That's still going on in third year!. Or even, like, placement (work placement) last year 'who's going to get up and now and do her hair? Like, she's going to be going to school in bits' and I remember Joan (her friend in college) said one day 'so what! Why do you make

your kids wear their dicky bows and all that?', like, 'why do they have to be pristine every day of the week? My kids never wear the dicky bow in their life!' whereas I'm 'it's part of the uniform, they have to wear it'. I don't – I'm like don't break the rules, they're in primary school, you know like, you're setting them up for a fall if they're going to secondary and they can't get away with nothing. So, but like that it's kind of well – I did the first sleepover last night [on her work placement], so Michael sent me a photograph this morning. Ella he did her hair and it looked grand, whereas this time last year I'd have been 'I'm afraid to look at this'. But I'm learning to let go a little bit.

Across the families, there were clear differences in how role changes unfolded and how quickly they settled into new patterns. Some families managed the transition with relative ease once the initial disruption passed, while others continued to struggle with uneven workloads, persistent tensions or uncertainty about who should take responsibility for particular tasks. In households where communication improved early on, the re-negotiation of roles happened more smoothly and led to a stronger sense of shared responsibility. In contrast, families that entered HE with rigid expectations around gender or parental roles experienced more conflict and took longer to find workable arrangements. Despite these variations, all families eventually arrived at some form of re-alignment, though the degree of symmetry or balance achieved differed widely. These comparisons suggest that while HE participation consistently acted as a catalyst for change, the nature of the family's pre-existing routines, relationships and resources shaped how role transformation played out in practice.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the thematic areas of Roles and Relationships. These key findings demonstrated that HE had a dramatic impact on the family home and more specifically the roles and relationships of the family members. Summarised in the following table under Relationships and Roles.

Relationship Summary of Findings

- All relationships in the family changed
- Shift in relationship dynamics due to knowledge acquired in HE, leading to more power and visibility for both students.
- Use of withholding sex (Power) until partner bought into and helped with the HE experience.
- Children of mothers in HE suffered emotionally
- Resulted in the non-HE children becoming more independent
- Brought siblings closer together

- Changes in parental relationships resulted in the equalisation of household responsibilities
- Peer relationships changed
- Relationships changed with non-HE Children and non- HE parent due to increase in time spent with each other.

Roles Summary of findings

-All roles within the family changed.

- Changes in roles related to food had the greatest impact on family members.

- Parent in HE had difficulties letting go.

- All families went through a three step process of Step 1 – Role conflict

Step 2 – Role re-negotiation

Step 3 – Role transition or transformation

Table 14 Main Summary of Findings Chapter 8

The following Chapter 9 examines the findings on Educational socialisation, Liquid education and Language.

CHAPTER 9 FINDINGS: SOCIALISATION, LIQUID EDUCATION, COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONS AND LANGUAGE

9.1 Introduction

This chapter examines three key themes from the findings, 1) Educational socialization, 2) liquid education and 3) language. This Chapter is a continuation of Chapters 7 and 8 and concludes the Findings Chapters. 9.2 Educational socialisation examines the family's educational values and how these are transmitted within the family, it also incorporates the role of family books in the family home. 9.3 Liquid education focuses on the learning between the dyadic pairs, how HE entered the family home; the impact of HE on the siblings and the extended family. 9.4 Collective transformations in the family were examined. The final theme 9.5 Language was discussed with specific focus on HE language and the family home.

9.2 Education Socialization - family educational values

One thing that came across in relation to the importance of education within the family, was the consistent values being reinforced a critical one being 'studying something that you love and that makes you happy'. All families instilled this into their family members. Parental investment in education and books in the home was apparent, which meant inadvertently that they valued education in the family.

Family 1

The value the family placed on education was very strong. This was evident in the many concrete examples the family provided from the value of reading and books, the parents investment in their children's education, and also it wasn't an option for the children not to go to HE. The mother (Mary) clearly stated that they were to go to college, but they had to study something not just 'for the sake of it'. They believed that if you work hard and get an education this would lead to success and money. The father (Gerry) set the standard and the children felt motivated by his attendance in HE.

David (Adult Child Student) "He [his Dad] never got lower than an A in any exams when he finished his degree and, like, he always said that it doesn't matter what you study as long as you: 1. Do your best, what you can do, and 2. enjoy what you are studying, nobody can take it from you. And he always said that no matter what I went into they'd be proud of what I did. Like, he made the joke that I could be a male stripper and making ten grand an hour but as long as I was happy with what I was doing, he'd be proud of me.

Gerry “In order to get the big car and the big house, you have to put the work in now to get the result of that, which is the big car and the big house. Education. Education, education. You have to do it. So, you – if you don’t educate yourself in this day and age you might as well look forward to a life of the dole which is something that [stern voice] none of my children are going to do!”.

Mary “but, like, where me kids are concerned, I’ve always turned around to them, even before college and said “no, you’re going to college, you’ve no choice in this house. You are going to college and you’re not going to study shite either” ... “you’re going to study something of value”, you know?”.

Father’s values around education and exams would culminate in a phrase he used “failure to prepare is preparing to fail” and he tried to instil this work ethic into David coming up to the leaving certificate.

Gerry “as I said earlier, fail to prepare, prepare to fail”.

Mary and Gerry have been heavily involved in their children’s education, from parent teacher meeting to the importance they placed on knowing what is going on in the school at both a formal (at the parent teacher meetings, board of management) and informal level (Chats at the school yard, knowing the other mums).

Family 2

‘Education is the way to go’ according to Precious and she said this over and over again to her children and it is the currency for your social standing in the community and also in society. ‘It will give you access to jobs and once you have it nobody can take it away from you’. It then permeates all the decisions you would make in your life and potentially you would ‘make better decisions the better educated you are’, she explained. She (Mother Precious) immersed herself in her children’s education and was involved in her children’s school and helped her children with their assignments in school. She also reinforced the point that they must study something they loved because if not they would fail ‘study what you want to study in your heart’.

Precious “It’s (Education) the best because it place you in a good position within the community, within your society and in the labour market... so as far as I’m concerned it’s the way to go.”

Family 3

Tom (Parent Student) sought out and got his son into the best school and he was engaged in his education from attending parent teacher meetings, to ensuring his homework was done. He consistently reaffirmed to his son that if he wants to succeed in this world he needs an education. Ian (son) thinks that if you don't have an education you will struggle and that you are better off having it than not.

Tom I'm thinking all the time, right, if he's going to have a chance, the better the school he goes to, education and all of that, it's going to give him a better chance. I mean the way the world is if you want to get anywhere you have to get an education, you know,...– if you're not going to be a top footballer or top musician, you know grand, but if your not then you're going to have to have an education. That would be my – everything I would have been saying to him like, from when he was four or five.

Ian "I think it's very important, yeah. I think it's, like I think it's – it can just open so many doors, you know, for anyone - gives them so much opportunity. I'm not saying everyone does but people – you're better off with it than without it, it's just really important to have [an education].

Family 4

The mother and father in this family invested everything into their children's education and placed a massive emphasis on 'that piece of paper'. This value on education was felt intergenerationally from Tracy's family. Tracy (Mother) reinforced that once they were happy doing what they were doing and they were nice human beings and respectful means that she had succeeded.

Maurice (Father) "...everything to do with the boys was influenced around education– and it's only when you start thinking – everything we have done, it's for – for them. As I've told them – as I said 'stay away from building sites and get your education, you can go anywhere you want in the world, do anything you want in the world... with that piece of paper.

Tracy "I'd say to the kids about the importance of having a degree and having a good career. Maurice is a qualified carpenter by trade and he would just say to Ryan 'don't do what I did and kill yourself on building sites'. And you know what once they're happy doing what they're doing and they're respectful to people.– they (her parents) had put a very high value on education and, my mother in particular, so they just wanted me to go. So I'd say 'look it, if they want to go off and work for a while and just don't do it for the sake of it, do something you love' and if you do something you love you'll never feel like you've worked a day in your life.

Ryan (Child Non-HE) “As a person its (education) key for anything, like, if you don’t have education in something there’s no point in trying to do it. Without education you can’t go anywhere.

They had individualized their children’s education, which had begun in the previous generation with Tracy’s mother choosing to send her to a rural school to get a better education. Then she made specific decisions based on their area of interest and their educational needs, ‘best fit’ for her children she tailored their education specifically to them, “we’d four boys in four different schools”.

Family 5

It is evident in the conversation with the family that education was very important in their family. The parent who was not in education tried to impart on the children that they do not want to end up like him as a taxi driver, courier etc.

Ger (Parent Student) “School is so important – always drummed into them from day one. One thing for me is I think no matter what they do, they have to enjoy it. Lee told me there a while ago I locked him in the bathroom for two hours, now I don’t remember this, I’m sure it was probably two minutes, till he learned the word hospital, to spell it. ‘You locked me in! Nobody else’s Ma does that!’.

Ger “The two boys’ father never went to school. It was an awful shame. Michael [the girls Dad] is dyslexic, so education is a big thing to him ...because he doesn’t want the kids to do the same things he has done– Michaels’s a taxi driver ... He’d be positive about education but wants me to do the work. He feels he wouldn’t be confident to think he can do it [their homework] with them”.

Lee (Adult Child Student) “Well for me and me Ma, do certainly think education is important like. And, like, I know Michael didn’t he didn’t finish school but he wants Ella to finish school and he wants my little sister, Joy, to finish school. Even if nothing comes out of them, at least they have school because nowadays you can’t even get a job in Spar without your Leaving Cert. I feel anyway, Ma always wanted me to go on to third level, like.

Ella (Child Non-HE) “Because you need an education to get a good job, you know.

Michael (Father Non-HE) “Yeah. I think you all should go to college when you get your Leaving Cert.

9.2.1 “The cookbooks have been replaced with sociology books! yeah”

All families spoke about the role that books played in their present family or intergenerationally in their parents’ homes.

Family 1

Mary (Parent Student) explained how she read Dr Seuss to her kids when they were younger and that she still had David's (Adult Child Student) first book. David developed a specific preference for psychological thrillers. He says that he was read to but that he did most of the reading himself. His mother explained at length the amount she used to read to him as a child.

Mary “Books in our home like Dr Seuss. I used to go out of me way to get Dr Seuss books. Anything Dr zeussy I still have them at home. I still have David’s first book at home. Green eggs and ham”.

Family 2

Precious (Parent Student) was very proud of all the books in her house. Olu (Adult Child Student) explained that her mother would read to her as a child before they went to bed.

Precious “people come into our house and they see the bookshelves and they’re like “you like books in this house, everybody is kind of studying, your son is in college, your daughter is in college, even the little one (youngest daughter) in secondary school, she’s kind of” – every time “oh I have this project to do” only in secondary school. Because she wants to be, somebody who is doing something serious”

Olu “Like, see, you know, like, we’d get books from school and she’d read stuff like that to us, like, before we went to bed.

Family 3

Ian (Adult Child Student) remembers as a child his father would read him Stephen King, he says he doesn’t remember the fairy tales. His father (Tom) used to make up stories and create them for Ian. His father would also explain to his son what was happening in the books he was reading.

Ian “There would have been – he (his Dad Tom) read, like, Stephen King and stuff. I swear, he used to! I can’t really remember, like, fairy tales and stuff. I can remember – like, I still have books upstairs. I remember I just use to love, like, horror fiction and stuff. I used to love him reading the stories, I was always getting him to read, like. He was great, he liked the – trying to come up with, like, different things and thinking outside the box. But it’d be, like,

“here Dad, can you tell me a story” and he’d be reading a book and it was, like, “can you tell me what’s happening? Go on”.

Tom “Me Da (the grandfather) was intelligent and he would love to – but he just never – he was a plumber and central heating fitter so he put radiators in houses and he would’ve loved history and he bought library books about history and I would have kind of, you know, I read them and that.

Family 4

Tracy (Parent Student) explains the importance of homework and reading in the home. Reading and writing would have been a priority for them in their house. Dylan (Adult Child Student) explained that he does most of his research now online but that his parent read to him as a kid. The mother’s cook books have been replaced by sociology books.

Tracy “From an early age their homework would have to be done, their reading. We love reading stories, Roald Dahl, David Williams, especially with Colm here and I’d have to put on the special voices and the [mimics posh voice] ‘oh aunty!’ and he’s ‘no different voice, different voice’ and then I’ll be the thug and [mimics tough guy voice] ‘alright you, get ...’, you know what I mean? And he just loves the voices and I suppose we would have with Colm as well and I suppose with them all, we would always have educational toys, obviously they’d have their guns and they’d have whatever, stuff that they shouldn’t be having too, but their reading and their writing would have been a priority for us, definitely.

Tracy “The cookbooks have been replaced with sociology books! Yeah [laughs]”.

Tracy explains the intergenerational impact her mother’s books in the family home had on her and this has passed down to her family and the importance she places on books in her home.

Tracy “There was the encyclopaedias yeah! We were only laughing about it – there was always books in the house, always. Mam would have brought us to the library”.

Family 5

Ger (Parent Student) explains the intergenerational experiences of reading in that her mother was invested in her education by going to parent teacher meetings and she read her fantasy books. Her father read the newspaper even though he was illiterate. Ger didn’t like to read as a child and neither did Lee or Ella (Child Non-HE). Ger explains that because of Lee’s (Adult Child Student) ADHD it was impossible for him to concentrate as a child. She would make up stories and tell them to him. Lee began to read books in secondary school.

Ger “Yeah, she’d [her mother] always be – she did all the parent/teacher meetings and ... She read her little books, like, like, fantasy novels. Me Da He always had the paper. He can’t read, like, I don’t know why he – every day he bought the paper, always watched the news. “...telling them stories because with Lee – I never liked to read as a youngster. I was more of a daydreamer, you know, make up me own little stories and with Lee being ADHD you couldn’t read to him because he’d be like this he’d read the first page and go the last page. He just, you know, the concentration wasn’t there ...So, Ella has no interest in reading. It’s weird. Because everything – every year at parent/teacher meeting ‘she needs to read more’.

9.3 Liquid HE

The aim of this section was to bring together the influence which flowed between the family members from HE. Liquid education previously discussed in the Introduction Chapter 1 (Section 1.5) was employed as a metaphor to explain the effects of HE outside the home. On a practical level the impact of HE on the family was greater because the dyadic pair share conversations about their experience and HE was amplified in the home.

9.3.1 Intergenerational learning between the dyadic pairs

Family 1

Mary (Student Parent) imparted knowledge to David (Adult Child Student) about the benefits of not ‘writing off’ mature students and he took her advice and now works well with a mature student for group work in his class. David has used his course material to help Mary and students in her class to repair their laptops.

Mary I said “now, there are mature students don’t disregard them for group Cas and stuff” ...– he works with ah guy called John who is probably about the same age as me and he’s got a family and you know.

David “Because I’m in a very technical subject, there’s an awful lot of times where I’m called upon to help with a laptop or computer or the internet’s not working, “this isn’t working” and that people in her (his mother’s) course are having issues with their laptops and it’s a case of “my son can do that” and I don’t have an issue with that because the way I look at it is I can practice what I know. ... so I can apply my course in a practical way to somebody’s laptop.

Due to mother and son being in HE at the same time this has meant that David was exposed to his mother's course material, which has changed the way he sees the world. His mother has learned more about technology and so the information flow has been both ways.

David "But my outlook on certain issues in society, like, for example the Trump presidential campaign my way of looking at it would have been different to her way of looking at it because she'd see the social aspect of things, the way her course would be applied with the – the social classes and the ethnic classes and all these things that I wouldn't see. I'd see it from a very technical, factual standpoint but she'd see it from a very social, kind of human aspect that it'd have emotions ...and feelings and kind of human error would be attached to it, whereas I'm kind of black is white and white is black. There is no grey area. She's opened my eyes to a different way of looking at things. There is a human aspect of life,– I have learned something from her".

Family 2

Olu (Adult Child Student) has benefitted exponentially from her mother's knowledge of HE. This can be seen in the examples she gave about her mother helping her with referencing or certain theories, she understand that she is at an advantage having this knowledge from her mother. This information transfer happened both ways in that she also helped her mother with assessments and gives her feedback.

Olu "Yeah, So, like, my mum would be, like, "okay, this is how you do your CAO, this is how you do that", she'd know, like, the ropes of it all, Rather than, like, just going in, like, blindsided by everything. So I think she [mother] was a great help. "okay, this is that" and, like, student assistance and, like, Moodle and all that kind of stuff. She taught me, like, the referencing and stuff like that...if we're doing Marxism and, you know or things like you know communism, so she'll help-"oh, we already did this so here's a breakdown of everything" ...whereas people would have to go in and get that information for themselves. I think I help her too so, because, you know, she's – like, when she wants to give a presentation and stuff, she'll come to us and, like, present it to us and then we give her feedback".

Family 3

The fact that Ian went to HE before Tom (Parent Student) made it seem possible for Tom to attend HE. Between Tom and Ian (Adult Child Student) there has been a very large transfer of information and knowledge. Tom gave Ian a lot of help in first year with assessments and he remembers one time where he guided him step by step how to write an essay 'he was a huge help'.

Tom “Ian’s coming here before me I suppose made a difference- “I’d be really, really good at spelling so if I’m looking over something. Like, grammar and stuff like that would be good as well so I’d be quite happy to look over if Ian would say “probably – maybe that sentence is too long” and that, so.

Ian “He had me do – like, there was an essay and that and I nearly had a meltdown, that was like 3,000 words. I didn’t know what was I doing, up all night trying to do it and – it was in first year and in first year I was a bit more disorganised, but – and he helped me, like, just write out stuff. He’d never look at it but the time I had the big essay, that was that was brilliant. That was a big help. **(Family 3)**

The fact that Ian’s father was always studying did have an impact on him. Experiencing the same issues and having someone who understood was very valuable to both students. Help with referencing was another very valuable area of information transfer.

Ian “Yeah, he’s always studying. Yeah. Always. And that Kind of, makes me study more, yeah. He always has a book out, like. Like, he was having the same issues I was having in first year. So I could relate to it, like, the stress of working in groups and ...It’s the worst.

Both students helped each other in different ways and the information flow worked both ways. Ian helped Tom with course work also in that he wrote a song that his father used in a group work project. Tom helped Ian with his project in that he brought students from his course over to see Ian’s social entrepreneur project and they bought some of the packs on sale. The conversation that they have with each other in the home about HE benefits and deepens their understanding.

Ian “Like, now we can have intelligent conversations talking about theories and stuff like that because he would have done Sociology and stuff and we’d talked about, like, Durkheim and Marx and stuff, going deeper into things.

Family 4

Tracy (Parent Student) helped Dylan (Adult Child Student) with the English in his assessments as they both studied different courses, the overlaps identified by both were help with Moodle, referencing and writing. Tracy helped Dylan more with English and writing while Dylan helped Tracy with the technology side of things.

Family 5

Lee (Adult Child Student) was guided by his mother (Ger) not only how to do assignments but from her experience of how to do well in assignments. Lee’s mother also prepared him for his exams and how to study and revise for them.

Lee “Like, I had – I had a few problems with assignments and that and I’d ‘Ma, what would you do for that thing?’, you know, a bit of help. And she was ‘do this’ and, like you know, she’s trying to give me books and I’m saying ‘do you know what, they won’t expect you to have this book, if you get this book, reference it and it’ll get you more marks’. So in that way it is a big advantage.”.

Both students helped each other and this gave rise to conflict as they both learned differently. The partner Michael explains that sometimes there can be an argument if Lee’s demands for help are not immediately responded to by Ger. So Ger must juggle her own academic work with the demands of her son’s academic work, sometimes this juggle can give rise to conflict because when “Lee wants you to help him it’s now”..

9.3.2 HE in the family home

The Home was examined as a sub-theme because HE had forced a reconfiguration of the home environment. The evidence from the participants explains how they experienced HE in the home.

Family 1

Documented below are the children’s perspective on how HE has come into their home and how they see it in their everyday lives. They spoke of the tension in the house, there was books everywhere, they expressed that the home has been taken over by the HE students.

Kenneth (Child Non-HE)” Because there’s, like – there’s a certain tension in the air because it’s not like a– like, there’s, like, pieces of paper piled on top of each other, there’s books strewn everywhere, the house isn’t really in the best condition and it’s, like – it’s very quiet aside from, you know, the TV and that. But it’s very, very quiet. ... in the house”.

Sarah “There’s millions of psychology books that either are scattered all around the little table or by the chair that she uses or behind anywhere around the laptop and sometimes there’ll be, like, a row of, like, psychology books all, like, woah! Like, you can – the amount of books that I’ve seen you can fill the whole entire, like, bathroom, downstairs bathroom”.

Sarah (Child Non-HE) is the child not engaging in HE but she knows what her mother is studying and she has picked up books and read them. She is familiarizing herself with her mothers course content.

Sarah “Well, the – this one time I was, like, ‘Mam, I’m done reading all my books’ and then she was, like, ‘you see that red one right there? The big red one’, like, ‘near the printer’, ‘this

one?', she's like 'yeah, read that one!'. And I go 'but this is one of your psychology books!' But I read".

Gerry (Father non-HE) is becoming more aware of his wife's subject areas through conversations as explained previously under the relationship theme but he has also picked up her books and read some of her course content. It made him reflect.

Gerry "I've – I've skimmed through a couple of her books, there's one on the table there when I got home the other day and it was about the emotional center of the brain ...and I was kind of looking at it and thinking hmm. And then over on this side there was neuro-something dysregulation or something like that ..."

David (Adult Child Student) gave a detailed explanation about the family home and who studied where and the differences between him and his mother and how they studied in the family home. David studied with music and his mother likes silence so he studies in his room, his mother studies at the kitchen table.

Family 2

The family members feel HE in the home because there are sheets of paper and books everywhere and all spaces in the house are occupied, with certain rooms for certain people. There were unwritten rules. Olu (Adult Child Student) studies in her bedroom, her mother Precious studies in the living room and her father is in the kitchen. When it comes to exam time there is a tense atmosphere in the house and you would know there are students in HE in the house 'dead quiet-if it's around exam time'.

Olu "I think it's easier now because when we all – like, it'd be, like, worksheets everywhere, you know that type of thing, everyone is on top of each other, so it's ...different people's books ...No, I'd do it in my room because in the kitchen, it'd be, like, my dad, the living room was my mam, so it was, like, you kind of have your room and basically ...So, everyone had their own space? that was kind of unwritten, you don't go there, like, while, like, they're studying, like."

Family 3

Tom also places his notes on post-its and puts them up on the wall in the home for everyone to see. They have designated spaces in the house for studying; Tom (Parent Student) studies in the sitting room and Ian (Adult Child Student) studies in his room.

Ian "If you walk into the sitting room you'd see all the papers over the table, like, you'd see books everywhere. Just, like, even on the shelf, like there's psychology and all that – like, you can see there's – like, in my room I have all my stuff and then down in the sitting room he'll

have all his college stuff. So, like, if you walked up to the house it's the first thing you'd notice. 'ah there is definitely studying going on here'.

Tom "... so if I've ten reasons why social health, you know, we have to do it for the exam ...I would write it and put it on the wall and I've to look at that a few times to kind of – 'right now I have that, I'll put up something else'. it's more, like you know, the sticky bits of paper and sometimes ...

Family 4

Conversations in the home are also evidence of how HE permeates the family dialogue.

Ryan (Child Non-HE) "Just their projects mainly that's what they'd be talking about.

Dylan (Adult Child Student) discussed his projects with his family members and in doing so higher all members of the family are exposed to what he is studying.

Dylan "Like, it's mostly the kind of work that we'd have to bring home. If I was doing something related to my project I'd be working on it and I'd go down and I'd be discussing it in the house and everyone could hear.

Declan who is not in HE and is 11 years old was taking in what both family members in HE are doing, the language and the topics of discussion.

Declan "There'd be mostly mum going on about the amount of homework she has, but like I'd be listening.

Ryan who is not in HE believes that because of his mum in HE she is able to help him more with his school work with 'word projects' and his Dad with 'engineering projects'.

Family 5

The family members commented that you would know that HE is in the home because there are books everywhere and that you have to step over them and HE is present in the family talk.

Ella (Child Non HE) "They bring it [HE] home. All books and that, like, loads of my Ma's books are in the corner of me bedroom. Big pile of them!

Michael (Father Non HE) "They do be on the ground sometimes...stepping over them like.

Ella (Child Non-HE) "They talk about college to each other and then they moan".

Ger is very proud of how going to HE means that her daughter is already saying 'oh I'll be going to college'.

Ger (Parent Student) “But it’s just – it’s amazing kind of how little things they’re picking up ...from me. And then, like, even Ella is, like, ‘oh, I’ll be going to college’, you know, ‘I’ll be going to college and I’ll be doing this and I’ll be doing that’, you know.

9.3.3 Sibling Impact

Adult Child Student role in the family (Role Model)

The adult child student had a positive impact on their siblings’ aspiration for HE participation and all siblings in all families expressed an interest in going to HE. This was also reinforced by the fact that a parent was also in HE at the same time, HE participation had become the norm within the family, across both generations.

Family 1

David (Adult Child HE) had a responsibility to be a good role model for his brother and sister as he was the first to go to HE.

David “I don’t think it – like, I don’t feel it as pressure as much now. I would have felt it as pressure when I started because I’m the first child in my family to go to college ... Yes. ... and it was case of “you are the role model now for your brother and sister ... ‘look, your brother went to college and he did well, so if he can do it, you can do it””.

Family 2

Since Olu (Adult Child HE) started in college and her younger sister can see how much fun she is having and is now stating that she is going to college too.

Olu “She’s, like, “definitely, I’m going to college”.

Family 5

Lee’s (Adult Child HE) sister Ella has been expressing an interest in Lee’s experience in HE and is now also expressing an interest in that she now understands that it is not all hard work that there is a social life dimension too.

Lee “I think she’s sort of getting an interest and saying this actually sounds fun. It’s not just all about work, it’s actually about having a social life as well.

9.3.4 Extended Family and HE

HE had an impact on the extended family also. It challenged previously held conceptions of education. Many of the participants shared their HE experiences and projects with their grandparents. The grandparent's generation learned also from the dyadic pair's engagement in HE.

Family 3

Tom (Parent Student) explained how his extended family felt about education. He felt that the fact they put his educational achievements on the wall said something. His achievements would be pointed to people when they came into the house. He explains that they were proud of him and his achievements but there was no real support while he was achieving it.

Tom "They would have been kind of very proud of that and the report things would be put up in the living room and relatives came over, 'oh look, he got first in this'".

Family 4

Dylan's (Adult Child HE) grandfather learns from his grandson in HE through his assessments.

Tracy (Parent Student) "Very proud, very proud. Dylan's the eldest grandchild, the eldest child, so he's a great source of pride for the whole family. Granny and granddad, everyone, aunties and uncles, very proud. I think everyone is delighted. 'oh', you know, 'fair play to you', And they have been very supportive, yeah.

Dylan "I talk to my grandad ...Yeah, yeah, he loves the – like, my project, I was showing him videos of it working, like. He loves it. He's fairly impressed.

On their fathers side the mother and father could not read or write. Dylan sees the hard work that his grandfather did and his HE qualifications will benefit his whole family. His participation in HE will have an impact on the social class of his extended family. Dylan education is not just an individual pursuit it is a collective one, for his family.

Maurice "But my own father, yeah, would have shown me stuff throughout the years. But education-wise, he didn't read or write, so ... He never got the opportunity. **Family 4 Father not in HE**

Dylan (Adult Child HE) "Because he (his grandfather) – like, he worked very hard in his life ... Yeah. ... like, he done well for himself. He, like, he started from the bottom and worked his way up basically everywhere he had worked and it's just having that start point higher up,

he said 'it'll benefit you a lot more'. It is like I'm getting a bounce for the whole family from going to college.

Family 5

Intergenerational learning, literacy, social class and education were played out in the interactions between the grandfather, his daughter and his grandson. This was an amazing intergenerational insight.

Ger (Parent Student) "She [her Mother] always did our homework. He [her father] never once he did the homework with me and I was in third class, and I remember this, and I asked him to spell lunch and he spelled launch and I read it out, you know, like the teacher was correcting it, saying 'I had a jam sandwich for launch'. And I was, like – but I remember feeling that embarrassment the one day he does the homework with me'. Now I don't know why he did it, she could have been sick because she never went anywhere. She never drank, she never smoked, she never went away on holidays, they wouldn't have had it, because back in the day when he worked on building sites if it rained he didn't get paid. Now, like, they're grand. I remember one day he'd be watching Lee writing kind of like this [mimics him writing] and he was, like, 'what's he doing?', 'he's doing his homework Da'. I was up there because me Ma used to collect Andy for me when I'd be in work I'd collect Lee meself and then we'd walk up and collect him – Andy, so we'd be there probably the whole day, have me dinner and that. And he went over and he was just looking over his shoulder and he goes 'that's fascinating', so I said 'what is?', 'look at him knowing all them words'. Because he'd say to you, like, 'how could cats begin with 'c'? K-K-', he just doesn't get the whole writing thing – and he finds the younger kids fascinating when he sees them doing it – that they can read and they can write. You know, like, he can read the paper and the odd word he'd say 'what's that? Sound that out for me', but he just finds this - 'Lee's in college, Jesus!' Like, you know, 'I never thought he'd end up in college – I thought he'd be robbing cars and all' [laughs]. He was so bad, like. Because I remember him running around me Ma's table, he was only a kid, and me Da was standing there and next of all, he had a spoon in his hand, and he just stopped boom off his head, I said 'Dad!', 'I can't look at that young fella anymore, he's making me dizzy!' Lee just kept running and running and running. You see he [her Dad] came from – there's 18 of them. My granny had a two bedroom house in Ratstown ...And I remember his brother, would have been a year between the two of them, and somebody asked him to spell Ratstown where – they lived in Dublin, and he drew a rat because he just couldn't make out – so obviously she hadn't got time to keep them in school and she just – you know, back in the day – like he's 60- what is he now? He's 66 this year".

Lee (Adult Child HE) had a major impact on his extended family on both his mother's and father's side especially because his father had passed away as discussed in the biography section Chapter 7. His relations on his father's side are very proud and impressed with him in HE and are using him as a role model for his nieces and nephews. His aunt is very proud of him and she tells everyone he is doing a degree, he perceives this as their full support for him being in HE, he is not just doing it for himself now but for his immediate and extended family.

Lee (Adult Child HE) "Me aunty from me Da's side, like – because I'm real close to them, so it's like that family is split into two, one from Crosstown and one in Declan Street. So, I'm always down in Declan Street but they're always saying they're so proud of me because, like, I've gone this far and especially the way things were for me Da [he overdosed on heroin] and everything that turned out for him and all. They really, really are proud of me and they keep saying to me – because she has a little one, Rosey, she's only two or three but she's, like, 'I want you to be like him'. And just keep saying to me, and all the little cousins coming in and any time she, she's a hairdresser, so when she does her nixers in her house and if I come in, the first thing she says 'how's college? See him? He's doing ...' this and this and that and everyone's like 'oh are you really?' and all, like, 'ah stop talking!' I do say 'will you stop talking about it', like! But every person, if it's someone new and I walk in, she's like 'he's doing a degree!' So, yeah, like, I think like she's buzzing for me anyway and I'm doin it for them too ya know.

When the educational differential between generations increases this can give rise to conflicts. This excerpt from Ger's interview is an example of how this may play out in a family. Her daughter was being cared for by her grandparents while she was in college. Both grandparents were illiterate which means that Ger was the only one who could help her with her homework.

Ger (Parent Student) "She (Her daughter) does her homework but she waits for me to come in. It's, like, 'nobody else can do it' but me. Now, Michael's family are not great, you know, they're all dyslexic. Michael's Ma and Da can't read or write whereas we were lucky with my Ma because she'd done her, like, her Junior Cert – Inter Cert, she had those skills. Like if my Ma had've been like me Da, it'd have been – you know? You'd have nothing, like. Michaels's Ma would say to Ella 'write them Christmas cards to the neighbours'. You know, she went on Facebook, we thought it was the most hilarious thing – they can't, you know write – just thought it was gas. But I said to her one day – one of them helped with the homework up there [Michaels family] and it was – just had to redo it. And I was saying 'now Joy', I says 'I'll do your homework, you know, you don't need to do it in your nanny's' and she told them 'my Mammy said ...'[gasps]... im not to do my homework, because she had to rub everything out because yous are all stupid up here!' Of course he [Michael] came home 'did you call

them all stupid up there?', now I probably did [whispers] 'stupid!', you know. I don't remember. But the little bitch ratted me out! (**Family 5 Mother in HE**)

Family 1

The extended family members perceptions of Mary (Parent Student) changed since her HE participation, Mary's sister in law thinks she is going analyse her now because she is studying psychology as part of her course.

Mary "And of course everybody thinks you're a psychologist [laughs]! Like they'll say – like, me sister in law will say to me "oh you're doing that psychology", she says, like, "I better watch what I'm saying", she goes "ah you're probably analysing some shit that's coming out of me mouth!".

Mary's extended family are not dismissing her anymore they take on board what she is saying.

Mary "So, now I have power – like whereas before I would have been dismissed. They're not dismissing me anymore".

Mary's increased knowledge had adversely affected her relationship with her mother in law.

Mary "Like, with your mother (Her mother in law) sometimes, you know, like I know she – she likes me going back to education but she – she doesn't like that I would know something that she wouldn't which is, you know, and sometimes we bang heads. Because she spent so many years knowing everything for everybody".

9.4 Collective Transformations

Many of the findings from the families could be interpreted as collective transformations and this will be discussed further in Chapter 10. The following examples demonstrate the collective transformations which have occurred for family members.

Family 1

Invisible- visible Mother

In Mary's (Student Parent) individual interview she spoke at length about how she felt that she was invisible in the family, but due to her return to college she now feels visible. In the family focus group I asked the family members what they thought about Mary's feelings about being invisible.

David (Adult Child Student) "she was invisible because she was there all the time and it was kind of you knew 'oh Mam's at home' and then of course Mam's not home and 'oh! Where's Mam?!' I understand the whole invisible thing where you know now she's – she's not there,

she's visible because she's not there anymore. You're actively saying 'oh she's not home now' or 'she's still in college' or she's studying, yeah it's bad because it was – it was taken for granted that Ma will be at home, but now it's a case of 'ah, Mam's not home, so x, y and z must be done' because we know [speaker's emphasis] she's not at home.

Sarah (Child Non-HE) "Well, I'm kind of in the middle with, like, the whole visible/invisible, invisible/visible thing because I know she is, like, at college and I understand that she's busy and I come home earlier than her because we're, like, two different – like, I'm in primary school, there's secondary school in the middle of this, so I kind of [pause] – I kind of think that it's – I shouldn't be thinking that, like, she's invisible and now she's visible. Like, I just don't understand that she's, like, needing to do this [assignments for college], that, and the other and ... that's really it.

Kenneth (Child Non-HE) "I can definitely see where she's [Mother] coming from, like, before college what was it? There was always the guarantee that Mam would be home and that when I would come home at three o'clock, you know, and now I come home at 3.40pm and Mam isn't home, neither is Dad, neither is David and I see if and it's sort of – I can really, I really can understand where she's coming from where it really is sort of, like, a thankless job and, you know, before college when she was just at home. And yeah, like, I can definitely understand where she's coming from.

Sarah revisits the question later on in the interview and looks at her mother in the eyes and says:

Sarah (Child Non-HE) "I want to go back to the invisible thing again, she was never invisible in the first place".

Sarah never saw her mother as invisible before she attended HE. Unlike the other family members she loved and appreciated her before she began in HE, for her she didn't have to attend HE for her to be viewed as visible in her eyes.

Mary explains that because she went to HE her husband now looks at her differently. Her attendance in HE had caused a change in how her husband perceives her, so there was a transformation in how he perceives her as a student.

Mary "But now he [Gerry] looks – he does look at me different I think.

Family 4

Smart- Not Dumb

The conversation between the family members during the family focus group is an example of how the family collectively perceives their mother differently and now sees her as smart and not dumb. Dylan explains that because she is happy now that this benefits the whole family.

Declan (Child Non-HE) “This is the smart [laughs] – she’s (his mother) smarter, she’s a bit [laughs] – I can’t say. Sometimes you are – sometimes– dumb.

Tracy (Parent Student) “You can say it Dara I’m not as dumb as I was!”

Dylan (Adult Child Student) “ Ah she’s [Mother] definitely changed, she seems a lot more confident in herself since she went to college. I suppose she’s around people more often, meeting new people. Better for us all she’s happy”.

Family 5

Michael (Father Non-HE) explains that his partner is happier now since she is attending HE. There is a collective understanding with the family members that it has been good for her because previously she was fed up.

Michael “Before she went to college she was a bit down, weren’t you? Because you’d be sitting around the house all the time ...

Ger (Parent Student) “Yeah. I was fed up”.

Michael “I think she is happier now, so the house is happier yeah.

9.5 Language

9.5.1 HE Language and the Family (home) Collective

The findings on language were an example of Liquid education but due to its theoretical significance in the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) I felt it was necessary to leave language as a separate theme and not subsume it under the LE theme.

Family 1

Sarah (Child Non-HE) had observed that the language in the house has changed since her mother and brother were in HE.

Sarah “The words in the house have changed...David or Mam, like, what they do is just, like, Kenneth might be saying, like, ‘oh this, that, and the other’ that’s, like, like has to do with

computers that you've never heard of these words only if you're going to college or if you're really clever or something like a technology thing. And the same for Mam stuff too because it's kind of all like big words".

Kenneth (Child Non-HE) had devised a way of understanding the new language in the home by breaking the individual words down.

Kenneth "Like, I've encountered the words before and I have a rough idea of what the individual words mean ...more so in David's kind of course yeah. But I – it's sort of like 2+2 sort of situation where it's deficiency, break it down it's less of something and cognitive, it's your brain. So, you know I break them down then I understand".

This is an example of Mary (Parent Student) teaching her daughter (Sarah) (Child Non-HE) about the age of criminal responsibility. Mary was learning about this topic in college the week of her daughter's birthday.

Mary "What were ye told Sarah on your 12th birthday? What did I say to you?

Sarah Okay [laughs]. So, Mam, when we were, like, eating the cake or something she – she says actually 'Sarah, when you turn 12 you're actually able to face criminal charges!

Mary 'The age of criminal responsibility!'

Sarah "Thanks Mam for letting me know on my birthday!".

Mary explains to her husband (Gerry)(Father Non-HE) about Cooper's boundaries.

Gerry "Cooper's boundaries with the – with the whole placement that you had and, like, some of the stuff of the actual boundaries and this and that and the other and Mary explained it to me 'oh there's a theory for that. Cooper's boundaries and it says ...' blah, blah, blah....But the whole psychology thing, the whole Schrodinger's cat, that Harvard study with the people who were asking questions of somebody and if they got it wrong they got to press a button to give them a shock".

Mary describes to her sons about the Zimbardo prison study in order for them to understand that 'you always need to know where the power is'.

Mary "I – I made the two of them [her two sons] look at Zimbardo when I did it. The prison study. And I made them look at the Ted talks with Zimbardo as well and Kenneth was saying to me, like, 'why do I need to know this? You're traumatising me' and I said 'No! You always need to know where the power is. Always'".

Family 3

Tom and Ian have conversations in the home about the content of their course.

Tom “No, that’s just the way I [laughs] kind of see it”. But even now when you ask me the name for something or something – I think yesterday I said ‘you know I know everything’, you asked me ‘what does such and such mean?’ and I went – I can’t remember ...

Ian “Frivolous”.

Tom “Frivolous, small and the way – like, I just said ‘it just means light hearted, like frivolous nature, you know ...and I said ‘you know I know everything’ and I will always say that. So, I think that I am a bit of a know-all but I am! **(Family 3)**

Family 4

Tracy (Parent Student) and the family explain in detail how language in the home has changed since both family members began in HE. This new language in HE has permeated into the family home and all family members explained how they have experienced this change. Dylan (Adult Child Student) however explained that he has to change or adapt the language he would use in college to the language he would use at home, he has to ‘dumb it down’..

Tracy “The language has changed here. I suppose you’re learning new words on all the time, even – especially for your – your assignment and you’re kind of – you would use the thesauras or whatever ...Yeah. ... refer back to that word – use that word so many times now and even it was Mary McAleese used misogynic I can’t even remember it ...Misogyny! I thought it was – I’ve heard misogynist, that’s not right! Yeah. So I kind of brought that into the sociology I suppose, the – the mysogenic scrutiny of the Catholic Church and I was saying it wrong and yeah – so you would, you would definitely use different words at home now.

Dylan “Say, like, I wouldn’t be able to explain some aspects of my college work to my – well, maybe to my dad, he’d be a lot more technically minded than my mother. So, college-related stuff I’d make the assumption they (my friends and some family members) don’t understand. The fact that ... I’m the oldest as well., I – well maybe they mightn’t understand everything but Dad’d understand it, I’d say, the technical stuff for my projects.

Ryan (Child Non-HE) “ Yeah I’d find definitely I’d have to do that because being in engineering you’ve to use a lot of technical language and that... you would have to kind of dumb it down.

Tracy explained to her children why her dogs were responding to a whistle and brought them through Pavlov’s theory and used her knowledge to explain to the rest of her family what was going on.

Tracy “But, we’ll say when the lady came out here with the dog, Igor ... and she was saying he’s – he’s – they recall at three whistles, he associates that with his treats. I said ‘oh yeah, Pavlov’s dog, oh yeah!’ Thought it was great making that connection.

Maurice has noticed that his wife’s vocabulary had changed.

Maurice (Father Non-HE) Sometimes, yeah, Your mam does come out with a lot bigger words now than she used to! Alright, speak English, would ya!.

If Dylan can explain it then the family knows he understands what he is studying and this is perceived by his father as confidence in his subject matter.

Ryan “Yeah, he (his brother in HE) speaks – he speaks about it a lot, but he uses very big polished words that we don’t understand!

Dylan “I try – I think I’m breaking it down simply! [laughs] I can’t dumb it down enough!

Maurice “ I’ll explain it to you’, and ill say ‘no, you’re grand. Don’t!’

Tracy “Give us the simple version!

Dylan “I’ll draw it out.”

Maurice “It’s great that he has the confidence to do that explain it like.

Family 5

Ger (Parent Student) explains the transition she went through when she began to learn new words and then how her extended family who have not engaged in HE noticed and asked her to simplify her terminology and they would ‘pull her up on it’. She apologizes to her family and breaks the terms down. This makes her feel like an outsider and in order to feel like an insider again she breaks it down for them so they are all on the same level of understanding.

Ger “Do you know what I mean, like, I don’t come from – like, my father was a plasterer, my mother was always at home... But I don’t know, I find meself sometimes – this might sound stupid but I’m using words and they’re all going ‘what the hell are you talking about?!’ and I’m, like, ‘sorry’ and I’ll explain it, whereas I suppose not having that kind of language – I’ve a different language now than I had when I started!’ The language like, yeah. They’d be, like, ‘what’s she on ...?’ and, like, they pull me up on it. They’ll say to me, like what are you talking about? What’s that mean?’ and I’ll be, like – there was one day, I don’t know what it was I think it was in second year and I was, like, ‘oh yeah’ blah, blah, blah. They were, like, ‘what the hell are you even on about?’, do you know what I mean? Because I went back, it probably sounds stupid, when I walked into – I don’t know what, something about advocacy and I was, like, ‘what does that word mean? ’Like, to me like now, you’re advocating on

somebody's behalf, like it's a simple enough word. And it was explained to me and I was, like, 'oh yeah, that's ...', yeah. 'But why couldn't you just say it the way I say it!', you know what I mean, like, support or you know what I mean. So, there was a few fancy words that kind of took me breath away.

Lee (Adult Child Student) explained that he and his mother who is also in HE have their 'own little language' because of their shared experience. This separates them from the other family members who don't understand what they are speaking about. But they are listening because the conversations are happening within the family home.

Lee "Yeah, like, because she's constantly talking about her placement now. But she's only talking to me about it..' and this and that and all – but everyone else in the house are going 'what are you even talking about?' And we were talking about disabilities, the different types of disabilities, like the Medical Model etc. And they're just looking and saying 'what?' so me and Ma are talking in, like, our own little language now. So, it's real, like, we have our own language in the house. **(Family 5)**

Family 5 summarises the sentiments expressed by the other families about the HE experience and its impact on the family.

Michael "Well, at first it sort of tore us– apart, wasn't it?"

Ger "First year?"

Michael "Yeah, we sort of had to rejig things... a new way of doing all the stuff we did. And then after that sort of brought us back together then".

Conclusion

These findings (Chapters 7, 8 and 9) has presented the research findings. It began with an introduction and a table of the participants and their families, presented the family vignettes with the participants and their individual experiences documented within these vignettes. Chapter 8 examines the findings themes of Relationships and Roles. This chapter examined educational socialisation themes, liquid education effects and language. The next Chapter 10 will explore the research findings, interpret and situate them within the body of previously discussed literature from Chapters 3 and 4 and the theoretical lens of Berger and Luckmann (1966) as previously discussed in Chapter 5. The aim of this chapter was to ultimately provide an insight into the nuanced variations and overlaps of the lived experiences of the five families and their respective dyadic pairs, to tentatively point to the *liquid HE effects* on the family and to point to the *mycorrhizal role* the

family plays in the HE experience potentially because the family occupies the in-between space between the individual students and the HE institution.

Below is a table of the main summary findings from this Chapter 9

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parental investment in children's education had positive effects on children's educational aspirations and outcomes. -Main ideology within the families -Work hard at education =Job + Money (but all families specified that this must also include happiness, if you are not happy there is no point studying something that you like, it must make you happy) -Conversations (Language) in the home is how the values were transmitted from one generation to the next. -Families individualised their children's education -Engaging in the formal and informal aspects of school was important. -All families placed a great emphasis on books and reading in the family home. -Intergenerational effects of reading and books -HE flows into the family home and leaves no one untouched by its presence. It is felt in the language in the home, the physical environment, the extended family, the community and leads to collective transformations in the family. HE is not just an individual experience it is a familial experience, it is a collective endeavour. Collective transformation in how the family see the dyadic pairs then to now: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Invisible to visible; Powerless to powerful; Dumb to smart; lack of confidence to confidence - Language and accents was how the participants experienced their Social class and other peoples social class. -Fit in or not (Same accents, Language and knowledge = fit in; different accent + language Posh = not feeling like they fit in) -Accents in HE can make students feel like outsiders or insiders. -All participants in the study identified language as the most difficult part of HE socialisation process. -New language acquisition can leave participant feeling torn or caught. -All participants once HE language was acquired – had to change the way they spoke to non-HE participants “break it down so they could understand. -Each dyadic pair have their own HE language -Collective Language in the home changes -Non-HE family members devise ways of understanding the HE participant's new language. -Acquisition of HE language demarked the social class of the families in HE. |
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Table 15 Main Summary of Findings Chapter 9

The following Chapter 10 is a discussion of the findings and positions them within the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the body of literature discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 10 DISCUSSION- LIQUID EDUCATION AND THE MYCORRHIZAL

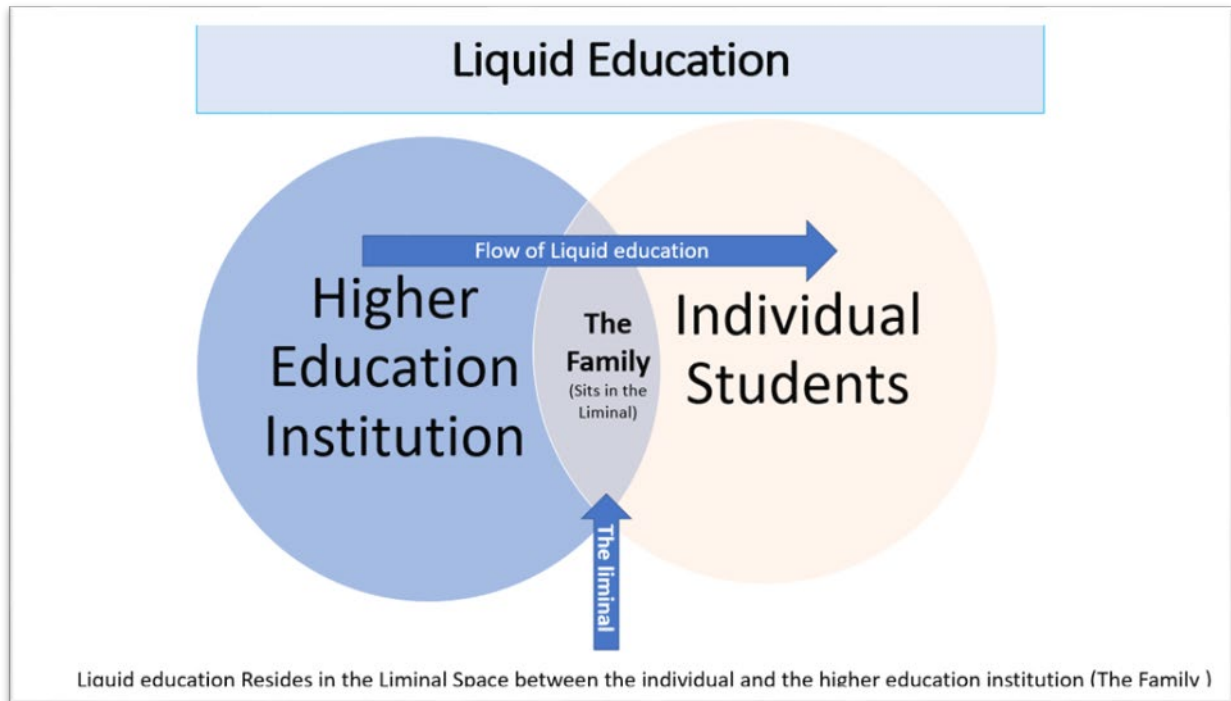


Fig 10. 1 Locating the Liminal- Liquid Education

10.1 Introduction

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 examined the findings under thematic areas related to the research questions and illuminated the various participants' experiences of HE. In the previous chapter, the participants' voices were raw and unedited, so the reality of their everyday experiences as first-generation family members could be relayed with clarity. This discussion chapter aims to situate the findings (with some references made to their words) directly placed within the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the pertinent literature discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Two metaphors were developed during the Analysis Phase 5 (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to guide the filtering process of the findings because they were vast and assist the synthesis of the research in this chapter: 1) 'Liquid education' (LE) and 2) 'Mycorrhizal Role' (MR). They facilitated the process of pushing the most pertinent findings to the fore for discussion. During an examination of the findings, language was selected as the most pertinent example of liquid HE effects on the family. The discussion on language will focus on the effects of the dyadic pair's HE language acquisition and the impact on the family as a collective.

The collective familial liquid education effects of HE has not been thoroughly explored in existing HE literature; nor has the literature fully accounted for the Mycorrhizal role (collective absorptive capacity or buffering effects) of the family for the FGS (dyadic pair) as evidenced in the research findings. As discussed in Chapter One this research began, as noted by O'Shea (2016) where little is known about the outcomes of HE outside of the individual and takes the next step into the family. It is the family as a collective who activates its mycorrhizal role because it experiences the liquid education effects and must transform, as a collective to survive. The Liquid education effect experienced by the families was amplified due to the participation of the intergenerational dyadic pair in HE concurrently.

10.2 Liquid Education Flowed in

Liquid education (LE) was developed as a metaphor for the research findings and was inspired by the work of Bauman and his metaphor of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000; Best, 2017). Bauman's (2000) use of liquid modernity was a means to explore current and historical explanations of capitalism and the changing nature of social bonds. Bauman's (2000) terms liquid modernity and solid modernity caused a rethink about the effects of HE for this research and posed a consideration of HE effects 'as liquid' dynamic and relational. This also informed the choice of the theoretical frame employed, Berger and Luckmann, (1966) and their focus on the socialisation process and language. As previously explained in Chapter 5, Bourdieu's tool kit fell short in its ability to explain the relational in HE experience of families. It was necessary to engage in discussion of Bourdieu in the literature review Chapter 3.3 because his work is extremely valuable. The dyadic pairs (Parent and child in HE) moved between the HE institution and the family and the effect of liquid education happened in both the home and HE, although in the main LE flowed from HE into the home, as per the research findings. LE had an impact on multiple dimensions of family life from the very fabric of the family home, socialisation and language, to its impact on relationships and roles.

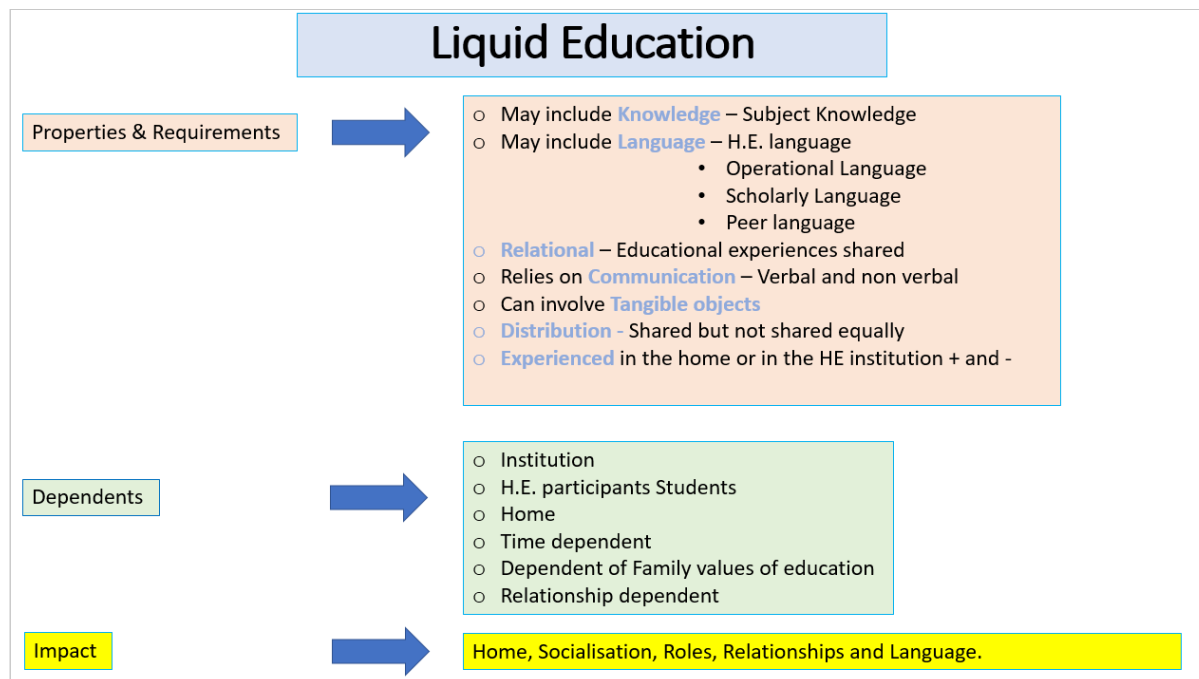


Fig 10. 2 Liquid Education Properties, Dependents and impact

The diagram above Fig 10.2 summarises the properties and requirements, dependents and impact of Liquid education (LE). The most powerful examples of this from the findings were experienced in the home and provided the focus for this section. However, it is worth noting that the dyadic pairs arrived in HE with liquid education from their families and pre-student lives also. In this sense the family experiences the effects of liquid education and activates its mycorrhizal role (discussed in Section 10.3 below) to withstand the ‘disruptions’ to its pre -HE ‘reality’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This research was an attempt to go beyond the individualised experiences of HE commonly found in the literature and move towards a collective interpretation of the impact of HE in the liminal as examined in Fig 10.1 and more specifically, its effects on the family and the home.

10.2.1 Liquid Education In the family home

Reality and knowledge pertain to specific social contexts, and these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 3).

This quote from Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasised the contextual and relational aspects of the research findings and highlighted the influence of the dyadic pair’s HE knowledge in the social context of the family home. The fabric of the family home or ‘homeplace’ (Gouthro, 2005) changed due to the dyadic pair’s participation in HE and the associated LE effects. All families separately spoke of an awareness on walking into the family home that they had family members who were engaging in HE.

There were books and study materials everywhere in the home, silence, a new language spoken, new sticky notes on the wall (symbolic objects), and engagement with non-HE family members in HE assessments with the dyadic pairs. The increased tension in the house was reported by participants as tangible at specific points in the year and the spatial impact of HE was noticeable because designated spaces for each of the dyadic pair to study in the home were evident, as a 'disruption' to the 'taken for granted reality' of the home (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

As discussed by the family members there were unwritten rules of engagement in the homes; when not to disturb the pairs, when to bring tea and coffee, and even when to ask or not about how exams went. These unwritten rules of engagement were governed by the new HE family dynamics and social interactions between family members. They became part of the family's reality through social interactions and repetition of specific actions which carry meanings for family members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Witnessing the conversations (O'Shea, 2016) between the dyadic pairs meant that even non-HE members were learning from them, in the home. The course content of one family member was experienced by the other family members not attending HE, which was common across all families, from picking up and reading books (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010), seeing 'sticky' study notes on the wall, to asking questions, to deciphering a new language spoken in the home. This visual manifestation of 'learning' was evident in many forms. For example, for Tom (Father in HE) and Ian (Son in HE), Tom placed his sticky study notes on the living room wall in the home. He had referred to a process in his educational biography that his parents placed his report cards on the fridge or on the wall for everyone to see when they came into his family home as a child. This was the way his parents demonstrated to him that education mattered, it 'became a thing'. The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) could be utilized to explain this process and the report cards his parents placed on display in the family home could be understood as a 'symbolic object'. If we apply the same principle to him now as a father attaching his sticky notes on the wall, this could suggest that Tom was doing the same thing his parents did, but for himself, as a reminder. This process may have given him a sense of pride in his HE journey and legitimized his role as a student and the associated norms around studying and acquiring new information. It could be interpreted that the sticky notes are an externalization of this educational experience for everyone to see or just for him and his son to experience; it was most definitely symbolic (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). When the students brought study materials home, the family home changed, for all family members (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010). HE participation of the dyadic pair firmly set new norms around education in the home because "the tone towards education is set" (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010, p. 460).

In line with the work of Finn (2014) and Reay et al., (2005), of the five participant first-generation families, four had gravitated towards a local institution and had benefitted from this decision (Mannay, 2013; Barker, 1972).

The benefits of the decision to attend a local HE institution cannot be underestimated and this finding was also reinforced by Cullinan et al., (2013) who explains that attending a local institution can provide even greater benefits for students from lower social classes; this will be discussed further under 10.4 'Disruption to the Reality of everyday life'.

As argued by Berger and Luckmann (1966) the originating reality of childhood was the home and all other realities experienced during secondary socialisation like school or HE, which follow after are artificial by comparison (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This could be considered potentially too rigid a demarcation because maybe all forms of socialisation are real, just some are more significant than others. The home is within the lifeworld; it is where "all human experience is grounded" (Gouthro, 2005, p. 6). In Chapter 5, Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain how a teacher tries to 'bring home' the contents s/he is imparting to the students. The application of this to the findings was that the educators need to consider that the home may be 'in the way of new internalizations' and to succeed in imparting knowledge to the student, they need to consider that their contents (taught in HE) must be vivid (making them as alive as the homeworld), relevant to the 'relevance structures' already present in the homeworld and interesting (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The lecturer could be trying to compete with an already 'internalized reality' which depending on several factors, could be very different and still be 'in the way' to a certain degree of new internalizations. In addition to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) point made about the 'significant others' and that no learning happens without a significant relationship, we can see how powerful this intergenerational experience was for the dyadic pair (Chapter 8 and 9) and all family members (Sections 8.3; 8.2.2; 8.2.4; 9.3.3; 9.5.1) and the role of the family in the dyadic pair's HE experience (8.3.1; 9.2; 9.5.2). This may explain why the findings point to a significant disruption experienced by the families due to the HE participation of the dyadic pair's.

The next section will begin by examining the socialisation process around what I categorised as positive educational values held by the families. From the findings it was evident that liquid education flowed into the family, because the family possessed positive educational values towards education. LE may not have entered the family if it was not positively predisposed to the value of education. I will then explore the impact of LE on the language in the home given its centrality for Berger and Luckmann (1966) as a key 'instrument of socialisation'.

10.2.2 Socialisation-family educational values

The transmission of positive values towards education were evidenced in the vivid accounts from the participants and was observed in family members who had never previously engaged in HE.

These values towards education experienced in the home which emerged from my findings had a positive effect on the aspirations of the children in their pursuit of HE (this echoes the studies undertaken by Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013; West, 1996; Reay, 2000; Gofen, 2009; Kupfer, 2012). One father, Michael, who had never been to HE and was illiterate, used his regrets about education to encourage his children to attend HE because “you don’t want to end up like me.” The participants across all families gave examples of repetitive narratives spoken in the family homes. These narratives gave an insight into the educational socialisation processes in the families and served to reinforce their educational values across the life span. In this instance language can be seen as an instrument of socialisation and the way the “common stock of knowledge” is “transmitted to the next generation” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 67). Examples of these powerful narratives, which used language as the instrument of positive socialisation towards education, were provided during the family focus groups and individual interviews; ‘Failing to prepare is preparing to fail’, need to ‘Get that piece of paper’ (the degree); ‘if you don’t have an education you will struggle’, ‘education will give you a better chance’. One prominent example of the values placed on education by a mother participant Ger when she describes an interaction with her son when she locked him in the toilet for two hours until he learned how to spell the word ‘hospital’. This was an example of how her son experienced his mother’s positive educational values. Family values about education’s positive benefits were transmitted across the generations in all families and impacted family members’ educational aspirations (this also echoes the work of Copper, 2017; Webb, 2019; Mc Eldowney, 2003). All siblings of the Adult Student Children, wanted to progress to HE, this pointed to the HE ‘spillover’ or multiplier effects (Altmedjd et al., 2020; Grgic and Bayer, 2015) and the chain enrolment effects of siblings (Kaczynski, 2011) of HE choice (Davies, 2015) and participation.

It was clear from the findings that each family had a clear set of educational values, which were expressed and repeated during the socialisation process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This was a collective family endeavor and there were many other ways the family transmitted its values to the family members, having books in the home, reading at bedtime, investing in homework, or attending parent-teacher meetings. This finding was supported by the valuable yet dated work of both Apple, (1982) and West (1996) whose research points to the connection between social class reproduction and educational socialisation within the family. If the parents were positively predisposed towards education and its value, it was found in this research that this had a positive impact on the children’s educational values and outlook (Reay, 2000; Gofen, 2009; Kupfer, 2012,). The link between parents’ higher education qualifications and their children’s likelihood of progressing to and completing HE is well established in the literature. However, it has not been examined with the depth it deserves, particularly when set against this study’s findings, which show the considerable effect that the dyadic pairs’ participation in HE had on their families. (McCoy & Byrne, 2011; Marginson, 2015; Piers & Chapin, 2022).

The Growing Up in Ireland Longitudinal study reaffirmed this because it demonstrated that the educational status of parents, specifically the mother, had the most significant impact on a child's future educational trajectory (Department of Health and Children, 2009; 2020).

All the families reinforced the following point to their children during the primary socialisation process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), that they must study and work at something that makes them happy, "you must love what you do or there is no point". This was very powerful it was spoken across the generations in the family focus groups "it was just not an option, not to attend HE" (London, 1989; Share & Carroll, 2013). All families in this research had HE aspirations for their children, which were heavily embedded within the family values and transmitted in the family home (Andrade, 2013; Ball et al., 2002; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010). There were "helpful educational ideologies" (Kiyama, 2010) across all families and it was that if you work hard at education, this will 'open up doors' for you and lead to success and money, but this was stated in conjunction with the previous point about happiness, the necessity for happiness ran parallel to this familial ideology. In many instances the collective familial aims and values were often not defined by what their children should do, but by what they should not do. The parental participants' aims and fears for their children were 'not end up on the dole', 'not to end up in the flats', and 'not end up on the building sites'. Education was presented as a solution to ensure these parental fears did not come to fruition. In essence this could be perceived as a utilitarian motivation to education, but it should be noted that there were also idealistic motivations around the intrinsic value of education discussed by the participants.

Employing the funds of knowledge (Section 3.4.2) (Azaola, 2020; Rios Aguilar & Kiyama, 2017; Kiyama, 2010; Moll et al., 1992; Kiyama & Rios -Aguilar, 2018; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) could shed further light on the interpretation of the findings from this research. In particular how these "helpful... educational ideologies" from the family assisted in the development of "college going realities" (Kiyama, 2010, p. 330). It must also be acknowledged that the family can also provide "limiting educational ideologies" (Kiyama, 2010, p. 330). Mitchall and Jaeger (2018) would support this point that the family has the potential to undermine or motivate their children's choices in education. In the findings from this research, the immediate family was helpful and motivational, but the extended family and peer groups were not always encouraging and positive. There are many pieces of research which focus on the families' capacity to dissuade HE participation (Gofen, 2009; Terenzini et al., 1996; Inman & Mayes, 1999; Edwards, 1993; Tett, 2000). These 'limiting educational ideologies' were evidenced in conversations the participants had with their extended family members and with peers (Kiyama, 2010). The funds of knowledge literature suggested that working-class knowledge is not valued in HE because it is not part of the dominant culture and FGS are perceived from a 'deficit' perspective (Azaola, 2020).

Kiyama, (2010) proposed that funds of knowledge was a critical framework in the move towards an “asset-based perspective” (p. 352) to gain an understanding of the creation of a family’s educational values, aspirations and ideologies. From my research it was the values and orientation ‘towards’ education that has the most powerful influence on FGS attending and successfully completing HE.

It is essential to gain an understanding of the ‘accumulated ... bodies of knowledge’ (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133) or the family’s social stock of knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1966) in order to facilitate all families regardless of social class in HE. This was evidenced in the findings on the sharing of HE assessments with non-HE family members, in the HE language and knowledge entering the home in all its liquid education effects, the dyadic pair’s HE experiences added to the family’s ‘stock of knowledge’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Examining the family as a unit in this research, assisted in locating and understanding what was important to the families and how they utilized the accumulated knowledge they possessed. Kiyama and Rios Aguilar, (2018) emphasised the study of households as a site of education and everyday education, positing a fundamental assumption, that education occurs everywhere and it is not limited to formal spheres like school or HE (Azaola, 2020). The research findings would also concur with these points, as is evidenced in language and educational value transmissions which all families discussed. The non-HE individuals consume HE in the family home and the dyadic pair do not arrive in HE as a blank slate, replete of the capitals necessary to succeed. This research found that the FGS were ‘full to the brim’; of both knowledge experience and of intergenerational familial aspirations for their HE completion. In essence as previously stated in Chapter 3, Funds of Knowledge emphasised the idea that these bodies of knowledge and experience held in the family should be leveraged by educators to enhance learning in education. Three of the families and six of the participants referred to the fact that they were not just doing HE for themselves but in fact they wanted to bring pride to the family and make their parents and grandparents proud, they were ‘pathfinders’ (Fleming & Finnegan, 2011, p. 13). As a FGS it was both an individual and collective pursuit “I’m doin it for them too ya know” Lee explained (Andrade, 2013; Tett, 2000; Finn, 2017). It is time for HE institutions to acknowledge the variation of accrued knowledge, its origins, various locations of creation and consumption, especially for FGF and FGS.

The funds of knowledge perspective can fundamentally assist the dyadic pair’s success in HE because it acknowledged the “skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133; Gofen, 2009). These skills and knowledge assist the wellbeing of the members of the family, as evidenced in the research findings and the Mycorrhizal role played by the family which will be discussed Section 10.3. Parallels could be drawn between the funds of Knowledge approach and the family capital approach (Gofen, 2009), Coleman’s (1988) social capital, or Webber’s (2017) family capital, all of which stress the way familial relationships sustained the students in HE, as per the findings from this research.

The following section will examine language and the linguistic socialisation process into HE, experienced by the participants. Language was selected for discussion, as the most pertinent example of liquid education in the family home.

10.2.3 Language

Language as a dominant theme emerged early on in the research process with the participants. Language was selected for discussion because it was an exemplar from the findings of a liquid education effect in the family home. The decision to showcase language as an example of liquid education was also guided by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and the role they attached to language as an instrument in the socialisation process. The section will examine the findings on HE knowledge and language in the home and the influence on the family as the dyadic pair engaged in HE.

The dyadic pairs all spoke of the new HE language and domain-specific knowledge acquisition process during HE. This was perceived negatively by the participants as part of socialisation process into HE. Language and accents experienced in HE had the capacity to make the students feel like they ‘fit’ the institution or ‘not’ (Bowl, 2003; Elkins & Hanke, 2018; Reay et al., 2010; Reay, 2002 Forsyth & Furlong, 2000; Quirke et al., 2024; Thomas & Quinn, 2007; Holdsworth, 2009; Holton, 2015). Reay’s (2002) point resonated with the research findings, in particular the search FGS go through, as they seek to find people just like themselves. The findings from this research demonstrated that while the socialisation process into HE was difficult for the participants and they did encounter students from various social class backgrounds because sixty percent of the students were from the same socio-economic background as the participants (SUSI grant was used as a proxy for first generation and social class, it is noted however, that this is not a very reliable proxy). This eased the search for similarity among the student body. O’Reilly’s (2008) explored HE language and its ability to make students feel and experience the “alien nature” of HE and this affected the students negatively in their ability to be able to cope with the transition (p. 31). All dyadic pairs in this research most definitely expressed this point in their interviews and the findings would concur with O’Reilly (2008). The participants did not feel armed with the cultural and linguistic capital to succeed in HE; this finding is supported by the work of Lareau, (2000). Lareau, (2000) explained the family’s integral role in providing linguistic capital to family members. It was evidenced in this research that many participants equated social class to the language used and or other students’ accents, leading them to determine whether someone was ‘posh’ or not (Bernstein, 1960).

Tom from Family 3 spoke about “holding back” both knowledge and complicated HE language so that people didn’t “feel less” this finding is consistent with the work of Hoggart, (1957). Hoggart (1957) discussed with such richness, how the success of education lies in the scholarships’ boy’s

ability to be able to remain between the two social classes keeping everyone happy, while knowing that he has become something that they are not, 'educated' (Hoggart, 1957). Tom spoke at length about how he navigated this process when he was in his taxi driving people around the city. He changed the way he spoke and what he spoke about depending on his assessment of their educational status.

Students are not prepared for this navigation during the acquisition of knowledge and language because mostly in HE the focus is on the student acquiring and understanding knowledge and not its utilization in everyday life. Institutions socialize students into HE without necessarily preparing them for the exit, when they sometimes may need to re-socialise into society with a new outlook or as 'educated' and many of the people who surround them are not, especially for FGS (Hoggart, 1957).

All participant families discussed the dyadic pair and how they had their own specific language. One of the participants Lee explained "me and Ma are talking in, like, our own little language now. So, it's real, like, we have our own language in the house". By incorporating certain concepts from the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) it is evident that the dyadic pair are building up 'semantic fields' as they build their own 'domain specific knowledge'. They have built up new 'typifications' which have arisen from their relational encounters which then became part of the 'social stock of knowledge' of the family. Moll et al., (1992) would refer to it as the dyadic pair adding to the "accumulated bodies of knowledge in the households" (p.133). In their relationship the dyadic pair have become accustomed to the new HE reality of everyday life which was structured around relevances, what is relevant to some family members' and what is not. The Parent student and the adult child student have, due to their interactions with each other and the HE institution, developed their own 'relevance structures' and have as a result 'overlapping relevance structure' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) because of their shared HE experience. The dyadic pairs worked out that not everyone in the family home has the same 'relevance structures' because not all members of the family are directly engaging in HE in a formal sense. Due to the fact that not everyone in society has access to knowledge because of the "socially distributed nature of knowledge", not everyone in the family in the beginning will be able to engage in conversations with the dyadic pair (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 46). The notion of an insider or an outsider (Merton, 1972) is important here because the distribution of this knowledge can be confusing for people if they do not have access to or do not have the knowledge necessary to engage in it, and they could be considered an 'outsider' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.87; Elias & Scotson, 1994). Some family members did express aspects of this because they found it difficult to gain access to the language of the dyadic pair in HE and to understand what they were speaking about. The work of Bernstein (2000) supports this finding that the distribution of knowledge "is not based on neutral differences in knowledge but on a distribution of knowledge which carries unequal value, power and potential" (p.xxi). The family

members experienced the unequal distribution of knowledge within the home but this changed when they too began to understand and gain the knowledge.

The non-HE children and partners as evidenced in the findings developed techniques of understanding the complicated words they encountered in the home between the dyadic pairs. For example “So, you know I break them down then I understand” Kenneth explains.

The dyadic pairs helped each other with the language socialisation process in HE, they seem to bring each other on. The HE language acquisition process was easier for the dyadic pairs as they had the positive ‘bonding effects’ of their collective experience because as noted in Chapter 5:

If the experience is shared by several individuals, it will be sedimented intersubjectively, may perhaps even form a profound bond between these individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 68).

It must be noted that their “experience is designated and transmitted linguistically however, it becomes accessible and strongly relevant to individuals who have not gone through it” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 68). This offers one explanation of how LE effects knowledge and language acquisition of the non- HE family members.

All dyadic pairs discussed how their everyday language had changed due to HE participation (Elkins & Hanke, 2018) and they had developed ways of ‘breaking it down or ‘dumbing it down’, so non-HE family members and friends understand their conversations. Maurice (Non-HE father) explained “Your mam does come out with a lot bigger words now than she used to! Alright, speak English, would ya!”. When Tracy says “Give us the simple version!”. When Maurice asks his wife ‘to speak English’ he is asking her to revert to the previous way that she spoke before her engagement with HE. The family feels and experiences the changes in the language of the dyadic pair. Sarah (Non-HE child) confirms this “the words in the house have changed...it’s kind of all like big words” and Ryan (Non-HE child) notices too “he (his brother) speaks about it (HE) a lot, but he uses very big polished words that we don’t understand”, the siblings questioned if they were in the “right house” because their reality has changed, due to the new HE language in the home (Elkins & Hanke, 2018).

The Non-HE children were learning too, LE came into the family home. There were specific examples of this noted in the findings from the families; learning about Pavlov’s dogs, Cooper’s boundaries, Age of criminal responsibility, Engineering terminology, Zimbardo and the prison study. These examples from the findings affirm that language and knowledge in the home had changed, facilitating new learning by all family members. Even though they were not directly involved HE as a formal experience, HE is relevant to them in a ‘derived manner’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 69) and is referred to as ‘Monothetic acquisition’ (Husserlian Term) (as cited in Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.69). They did not need to be involved in the creation of the knowledge

in order to understand it, liquid education had an impact on the collective family not just the dyadic pairs engaging in HE.

Non-HE family members navigated ways of deciphering the 'domain specific knowledge', a means by which they could move to become 'a knower' of the new language that they experienced in the home (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.70). This finding could be explained by O'Shea (2016) when she discusses the impact that HE has on the family home, she refers to these as 'hidden or invisible outcomes from university attendance' (p.75).

O'Shea (2015; 2016) explains that the conversations between family members facilitated the knowledge acquired in HE passing on to the other family members. The findings from this research are in congruence with the work of O'Shea (2016) and are demonstrated in a conversation which took place in a family focus group between family members. This conversation specifically demonstrates the effect of HE language in the home:

Ryan "Yeah, he (his brother in HE) speaks – he speaks about it a lot, but he uses very big polished words that we don't understand!

Dylan "I try – I think I'm breaking it down simply! [laughs] I can't dumb it down enough!

Maurice "I'll explain it to you', and I'll say 'no, you're grand. Don't'!

Tracy "Give us the simple version!

Dylan "I'll draw it out."

Maurice "It's great that he has the confidence to do that, explain it like.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) conversations are the most important vehicle for 'reality maintenance'. It is the everyday conversations which maintain the subjective reality of individuals. It is crucial to consider the valuable role of conversations in the transfer of liquid education from HE to the home. Berger and Luckmann (1966) stress the importance of the 'casualness of conversation' in maintaining the taken for granted reality of everyday life of the participants (p.152). The issue for the participants in this research was that due to the changing language and or knowledge transmitted in the family home, conversation lost its casualness and therefore posed a 'threat to the taken for granted' nature of the family (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). When you use the same common language as someone else you are in fact 'maintaining reality', when the language changes the reality changes also and results in 'disruptions to the subjective reality' of individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 154). The student's subjective realities were 'under threat' because there had been a "disruption of significant conversation with the mediators of the respective plausibility structures" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 155). The student parent as the significant

other, had maintained 'the plausibility structures' within the family and now there has been a disruption to them due to the dyadic pair engaging in HE. Applying Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory to the findings, when the participant was referring to their language, and specifically the language which was acquired before they assimilated their new language and knowledge from HE, it could be referred to as their 'common language' (p.154). When there is a disparity between the two, their 'common language', including their accents and the new HE language, Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that individuals will have 'returns to reality'.

A return to reality is where the individual goes back to "the few individuals who understand his in group allusions, to the section to which his accent belongs" (p.154). The family home in this research is the space where these constant 'returns to reality' occur as it is the 'in-between space'. A disconnect between the individual students and their families does not happen because the students are plugged into the family home and its members, the findings suggest. The work of Hoggan et al (2017) could be applied to interpret this finding because it could be suggested that the family is the safe space where "alternative interpretations" can begin to unfold (p.56) because the family serves to, through interactions, due to the shared experiences and meaning perspectives, gives rise to continuity. The family provides this continuity and because of the activated mycorrhizal role the family plays (which will be discussed Section 10.3), family members feel connected, even if there are challenges to their preconceived meaning perspectives or threats to their realities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The next section will examine the collective language acquisition process of the participants.

Collective Language Acquisition Process

Significantly, Tracy (Family 4 Student Parent) and Ger (Family 5 Student Parent) explained the process (Ardoin, 2017) by which their language socialisation occurred in HE and after the re-analysis of the findings it was evident they had both followed a similar HE collective language acquisition process. The word collective here denotes the impact that their language acquisition had on them and the family as a collective. They engaged in the same steps from arrival at HE to the point where they incorporated the HE language into their daily lives and honed the ability to be able 'to switch' (Elkins & Hanke, 2018) between or experience a "return to the reality" of the in group (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 154). This could also be referred to as a 'cool alteration' and the ability to be able 'to switch' is potentially linked to the student's ability to use the role of student for a specific purpose (social class and language acquisition) in a given context.

The two Parent students' experiences of their collective language acquisition could be summarized in the following 7 stages.

Stage 1 – Did not understand the language in HE (**Language Shock**)

Stage 2 Gradual understanding of language in HE (**Coasting**)

Stage 3 Gradual incorporation of HE language into everyday life (**Testing**)

Stage 4 Seeing and making connections between language in HE and language in the media or society; or experiences (**Connecting**)

Stage 5 Their experience of other people not in HE unable to understand what they were saying. (**External discontent**)

Stage 6 Breaking down HE Language for other people outside HE so that they can understand (**Breaking down**)

Stage 7 Honed the ability to ‘switch’ between HE language and everyday language which is understandable, depending on the situation. (**Switching**)

Table 16. Language acquisition Process

Interestingly, Ger and other participants developed the ability to ‘switch’ between the two, HE language and everyday language depending on the context. Tom spoke about how when he was a taxi driver he would ‘hold back’ academic language and knowledge so as not “to make someone ‘feel like crap’ because they don’t know something”. This is a recognition of his increased knowledge but a realisation that knowledge is socially distributed and that not everyone has access to knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Language and knowledge acquired in HE gave all participants more power and visibility (Luttrell, 1997).

The theme of language overlaps with a discussion on social class (Bernstein, 1960; Preece, 2015; Bourdieu et al 1994; Michaels et al., 2016; Lareau, 2000; 2011; Johnson, 2015; Hoff, 2003; Rowe, 2008; Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023) this connection was explained in the narrative from Ger where she explains this overlap and tension she experienced with (it is linked to the 7 stages documented above) her extended family. They noticed her increased knowledge and language base and her use of HE language in her everyday life. They did not have the knowledge to understand what she was speaking about, they would ‘pull her up on it’ she would then apologise to them and break it down then so they could understand. This sometimes left Ger feeling like an ‘outsider’ (Merton, 1972; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Elias & Scotson, 1994) in her own extended family or maybe they became outsiders to her experience of HE. This is a poignant example from Ger (Parent Student Family 5) “This might sound stupid but I’m using words and they’re all going ‘what the hell are you talking about?!’ but she regained entry to the family when she spoke in ‘their language’ not her newly acquired HE language, she had “returns to reality of the in group” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and she developed the ability to switch her code (Elkins & Hanke, 2018).

The extended family were also experiencing the liquid education effects. Ger increased her 'domain specific knowledge' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and according to Bernstein's (1960) work, Ger had acquired a different 'mode of speech'. Her linguistic difference became obvious to her family members, even though there was no gap between the social class levels of Ger and her extended family. There was however a future potential social class difference and this was made obvious to the extended family due to her linguistic transition (Bernstein, 1960; Merrill, 2015; Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023).

Her speech form used in the past with her extended family had changed, she was discouraged from using elaborate words and she never used abstract concepts (Elkins & Hanke, 2018). This was also experienced by three of the parent students. Since her engagement with HE these abstract concepts had become embedded within her everyday talk, she was using a different linguistic structure that her extended family were not familiar with, this academic language (Bernstein, 1960; Preece, 2015; Elkins & Hanke, 2018; Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023). If we return to Chp 3 (3.4.2) to the words of Bourdieu et al., (1994) to re-emphasise the role and 'bounce' that students with a very good relationship with academic language get, due to a history in their family of HE participation. This was because it "depends on an apprenticeship in language which is unequally complex, according to family background. Moreover, what we inherit from our social origins is not only a language, but – inseparably – a relationship to language and specifically to the value of language" (Bourdieu et al. 1994, p. 21). The family is the place where your apprenticeship in language is served so therefore efforts should be directed to increase the FGS linguistic socialisation capabilities (Hart & Risley, 2003; Hoff, 2003; Johnson, 2015; Lareau, 200,2011; Rowe, 2008; Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2023) so that they too can get the 'bounce' that their middle class and upper class counterparts experience. Until this happens as per the research findings in this research FGS, are at a distinct linguistic disadvantage.

Michaels et al., (2016) provided strong evidence that there are inherent expected differences around how and what one speaks depending on one's social class, if you go over the top and are overly didactic in a lower class situation you would be considered impolite. If you were to engage in this formal explication in an upper social class this would be an example of one's intelligence and be the norm. This was evidenced in the research findings with Lee's observations of his class mates and that they 'went on and on' and he considered them 'posh' due to the big words and their accents. This meant inadvertently that he was not 'posh' and used accents as a method of social class demarcation. Lynch and O'Riordan's (1998) research confirms the points made by Lee and the other participants and describes a parallel process felt by one of their participants as they too struggled with "'the cliques', accents and differing vocabulary" (p.105). As the dyadic pair engaged in HE the liquid education effects the language in the home and it changed because the home is the primary site of language acquisition (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The findings confirmed that all family members are being socialized into the academic language of HE and the hope would be that they

too would experience 'the bounce' or the liquid HE effects in their HE pursuits in the future (Finn, 2017; London, 1989).

The undercurrent identified and evidenced in the findings, was the ability of language and or knowledge acquired in HE to cause a rift or tension between family members with differing educational abilities or qualifications or class.

This rift or social class tension can have a severing effect (Inman & Mayes, 1999; Merrill, 1999; West 1996; Hoggart, 1957; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Friedman, 2016) and has the capacity for students to 'sometimes I feel a bit caught', caught, stuck in-between (Mannay, 2013;) or one could use the "fish in" (Bourdieu 1990) or "fish out of" (Reay et al., 2010) water analogy, all of which resonate with the research findings on an individual level. In the beginning Lee spoke about experiencing his social class through the language they spoke in HE, he didn't have access to it previously so he became frustrated and would say "what are you speaking just speak normal... Seriously just talk normal". As previously stated in Chapter 3 one of the greatest challenges facing first-generation students is their position on the margins of two cultures that of their friends and family and that of their college community (Zwerling & London, 1992; Hoggart, 1957; Bourdieu, 1999; Fleming, 2013). From my research findings the HE participants were not sitting on the margins of their immediate family because they had another family member engaging in HE at the same time (Evidenced in section 8.2.1 and 9.3.1). This intergenerational experience provides the students with a 'shielding effect' to the sometimes negative and divisive HE experience. Evidenced in the findings, this is because the family is sitting in the in-between space between the University and the individual (Evidenced in Chapter 9 Section 9.3.2; 9.4; 9.2). They did however experience negative in-between effects from their extended family and peers in some instances. (As evidenced in Chapter 8 Section 8.2.5; Chapter 9 section 9.5 and 9.3.4)

The next Section 10.3 continues the conversation on LE effects and moves to discuss how the family activated its Mycorrhizal role in order to withstand the LE effects. The next section demonstrates that the dyadic pairs' engagement in HE led to collective and individual transformations within their families. The position proposed here, informed by the research findings, is that the family occupied the in-between space between the individual and HE. This is evidenced in the findings because the family 'filters' (Gofen 2009; Berger & Luckmann, 1966) the HE experience and the dyadic pair 'bring(s) home' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 143) liquid education to the family. The dyadic pair brought their experiences of HE home, their books, language and knowledge. In turn, they go to the HE institution with their families firmly embedded within them, their familial aspirations and their "virtual handbags full" (Daniels, 2010).

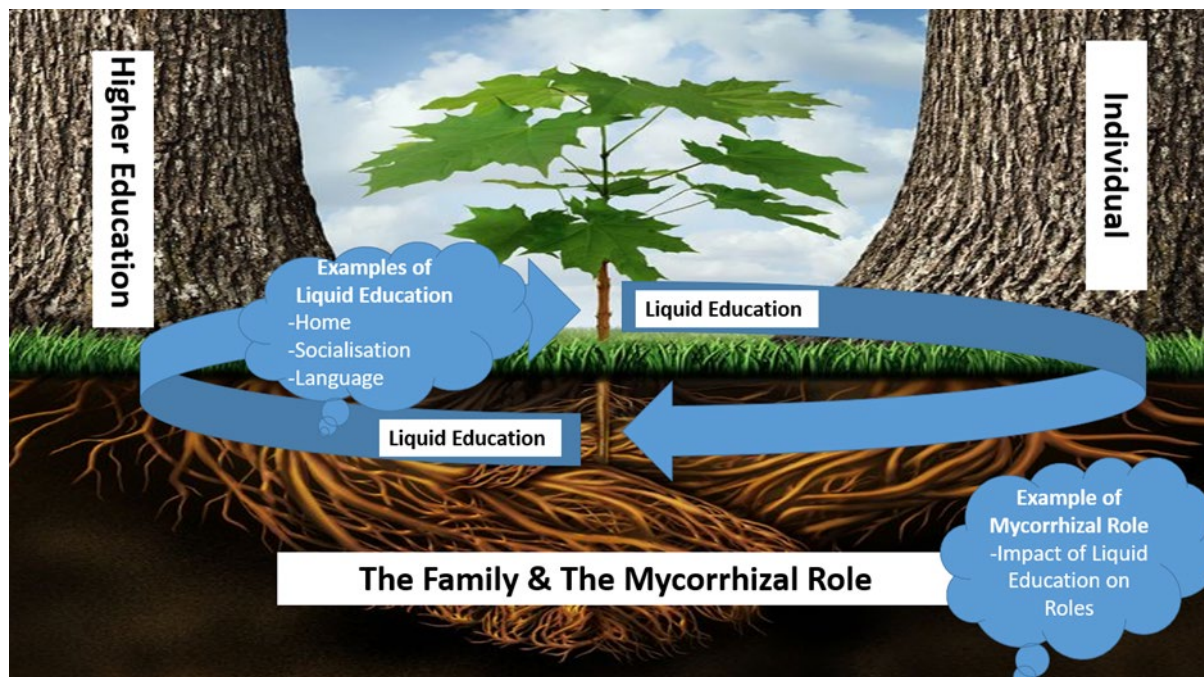


Fig 10. 3 The Family, the mycorrhizal role and the liquid education effects

Consistently, students as individuals are discussed in the literature as occupying the in-between space, individually and the space is perceived as an empty space or negative space, where they are caught (Holdsworth, 2009; O'Shea, 2019; Ingram, 2011; Mannay, 2013; Bourdieu et al., 1999; Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Friedman, 2016; Hoggart, 1957; Merrill, 1999; Wilcox et al., 2005). My research indicates that student participants are not navigating a void; rather, they and their families actively inhabit the in-between space together.

10.3 Mycorrhizal Role Activated

The previous section 10.2 discussed liquid education as a metaphor to explain HE flowing into the family home. This section will examine the second metaphor, the Mycorrhizal role, to clarify how the family grappled with the liquid education effects in the home. This occurred while they were trying to maintain continuity between the past (before HE participation) and present (HE participation of the dyadic pair) (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The use of the word 'Mycorrhizal' has great significance in light of the research findings. Mycorrhizal is normally discussed with reference to an invisible fungal underground network. This network assists the growth of trees in a forest it acts like a secondary root system for the trees. The trees are in a symbiotic relationship with the fungal network, its relational, it is the way trees communicate with each other (Wohlleben, 2016). The mycorrhizal network occupies the space in-between the trees, but this space is not a void, below ground it is filled with a very intelligent invisible system that redistributes nutrients and support to a tree that is under stress in the forest. This stress is rectified through these invisible networks (Mycellium), because the trees (the family) shift focus to the tree (the dyadic pair) in need.

There is no void, the void is filled, just like there is no void between HE and the individual, it is filled with the family, which mediates, redistributes roles due to the impact of Liquid education. This happens through a series of re-socialisation processes of roles, re-routing processes and practical support to the individuals in the family who need it, in order for the individuals to complete HE.

The Mycorrhizal role the family plays is evidenced in the findings (Chapter 8 Section 8.3 Roles; Chapter 9 Section 9.2 Educational socialisation) which will be discussed under the Roles section 10.3.3 below. This mycorrhizal role played by the families was demonstrated in the findings as suggested and also firmly supported in the literature (Webber 2015, 2017; Feeney & Lemay, 2012; Coleman, 1988; Gofen, 2009; Webb, 2019). Some families do not survive the HE experience, however all families in this research did survive, stayed together and completed HE. This process involved complicated negotiations in order for the “reality of everyday life” to proceed. The ‘embodied routines’ (when the dinner was ready, who brought the kids to school, reading of bedtime stories, seeing parents in the home) were disrupted which was the essence of family life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). From the findings it was evidenced that the family played a vital role in the ‘reality maintenance’ of its members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 149). The mycorrhizal network and the activated mycorrhizal role was the mechanism by which reality was maintained for the family because it lead to both a re-socialisation process (Who does what) and an “activation of capital located in the social relations of family members” (Webb, 2019, p. 542). This overarching cross cutting theme of the mycorrhizal role played by the family, acknowledges the support provided by the immediate and to a certain degree extended family to the dyadic pair in their HE pursuits. The finding of the mycorrhizal role played by the family could be framed in many ways, from Coleman’s (1988) work on social capital, Gofens’ (2009) work on family capital, Webber (2017) model of family capital or the work of Webb (2019). These authors all provide a framework for the analysis of the research findings around the support provided by family members to HE participants, but by employing the concept of the mycorrhizal network or role it assisted in conceptualisation the role of the family in the HE process of the dyadic pairs. Liquid education captures the wide ranging dynamic effects of education beyond the individual on the family. Family capital focused on what the family has while mycorrhizal role emphasises what the family does and has.

The Mycorrhizal function encompasses all forms of support identified above it is an overarching concept to explain the dynamic relational influence of liquid education on the family. It explains ‘the how’ the family navigates the liquid education effects and it does this by activating its mycorrhizal role. Family capital includes economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, emotional capital, parental aspirations, values and attitudes to education, an identity and sense of purpose (Gofen, 2009; Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013; Webber 2017).

The role which the family plays in the process of HE according to the findings from this research indicated that the Mycorrhizal role of the family enables *habitus clivè* (Bourdieu, 1999), *habitus tug* (Ingram, 2011), “or hysteresis to be managed” (Webb, 2019, p. 541). It must be noted that not all families in HE are in a position to provide all forms of capital and in many cases the hysteresis, or disruptions to the subjective reality, means the re-socialisation process cannot be managed and students may leave HE. This could be because they did not have a family activating its mycorrhizal role to assist their survival in HE.

The findings from my research are in line with the work of Webb, (2019) and it was observed that at all times the family aimed to ‘break the cycles of non-HE participation’. This was an overarching familial objective in all families and it sustained all families during this rupture of HE participation, which had a dramatic impact on the very fabric of family life. Webber (2017) discussed a model of family capital; incorporating economic capital, social capital, cultural capital and emotional capital. In all families they did not have the economic capital to attend HE and it was the state which provided them with the SUSI grant as discussed in Chapter 1. Cultural capital was experienced by the dyadic pair because they assisted each other in their assessments, referencing, moodle, presentations, deciphering theories and giving the other family member the ‘heads up’, helping each other navigate group work, HE language and providing support. The family provided the students with social capital by showing solidarity with their pursuits, but this was only found in the immediate family and not the extended family in all cases. By employing both metaphors that of liquid education and mycorrhizal role this chapter aimed to move the conversation to a relational dynamic process at play in the home, at a collective, dialectical, inter-subjective level. Liquid education was the “what” of the HE experience in the home and the mycorrhizal role is the “how” and what it does, as the family grapples with the experiences of the liquid education effects. The next section focuses on the findings on roles to explain the activation of the mycorrhizal role of the family, in order to navigate the liquid education effects.

The findings (Chapter 8 Section 8.3 and Chapter 9 Section 9.4 and 9.5.1) demonstrated the changes and transformation which family members and their associated roles experienced, due to the liquid education effects on the family home. All families went through a process of role conflict, and role re-negotiation which culminated in role transformations. There was also associated guilt (Brooks, 2015; Webber, 2015; Maynard & Pearsall, 1994; Radhika & Prakash, 1987) felt predominantly by the mother participants in the research due their additional role of student. The main areas of relational conflict within the findings (Webber, 2015; Brine & Waller, 2004; Edwards, 1993; Branje, 2018; Bianchi et al., 2000; Adams & Golsch, 2021; Zart, 2019; Markle, 2015; Sutor, 1987;) were centered on roles within the home, they required a re-negotiation in order to facilitate the HE participation of the dyadic pair, all families experienced this process.

Evidently, there was a 're-socialisation process' underway (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 163). As evidenced in the findings (Section 8.3), role conflict was a pinch point for all familial relationships as they navigated this role re-negotiation process. When re-negotiation took place, many roles shifted to the non-HE participants within the family including the children. The transition to a more stable environment, with less conflict for the family took in most cases one year, with one family stating that the transformations were still occurring in year three. One participant suggested that the conflict was so intense that she wanted 'to kill' her husband, while another participant explained that she was at 'loggerheads' with her partner. Three of the parent students explained that getting 'buy in' from their partners took time. One female parent student explained that she used the 'only power she had' as a woman in her marriage and she withdrew from sex in order to get her husband onboard with her HE pursuits.

Many of the parent students provided detailed descriptions of how their relationships with their partners had changed (Webber, 2015; 2017; Feeney & Lemay, 2012; Gottman et al., 2002; Gottman, 1999; Edwards, 1993; Merrill, 1999). A commonality of experience in relation to the changes due to their acquired knowledge and language in HE and the impact this had on the power dynamic between the couples was apparent in the research findings and supported by the research of Webber (2015). The power in many relationships had shifted, initially before the mothers began in HE it was perceived that the fathers had the power. Post HE participation of the mothers resulted in a power shift and the mothers due to their HE participation felt they had more power in the home and in their relationship with their partner (Webber, 2015). One non-HE father said 'the tables have turned', he was pointing to the fact that because now his wife is in HE she has more power. This finding resonates with the work of Webber (2015) and Sutor (1987). Within the work of Webber (2015) she discussed three areas of change that occurred between women and their husbands. The first was that HE changed the women's identity and resulted in increased self-esteem and confidence. These changes experienced by the women had an impact on their husbands' parenting practices. HE experience caused a change in the woman's "position in the relationship" (p.218) with their husbands, the women were more equal now. The findings from this research reflect the areas of change discussed by Webber (2015). Sutor's (1987) findings are very relevant here also because in my research, when there was conflict in the family the student took on their student role instead of their family role. The role of student was signified to the partners from the findings through their use of academic language. Sutor (1987) found that taking on the role of student and using HE language in a situation of conflict, was beneficial especially when they were being challenged.

The families were in the process of establishing a 'new reality'. One of the partners had a competing perspective because of a recently acquired body of theoretical knowledge due to their HE experience and it resulted in as noted by Hoffman "reality is established through social processes that pit competing perspectives against one another" (Hoffman, 2016, p. 110).

Competing perspectives were developed during the HE experience, which meant that in some respects the parents were against each other in the beginning, as demonstrated in many of the focus group conversations, due to the knowledge they acquired in HE (Section 8.2.2 and 9.5).

All Parent students in each family apart from Family 3 (Single parent family) expressed gratitude and thanks to their partners or husbands for 'stepping up' into the role to support them, activating the familial mycorrhizal role. It was noted by Feeney and Lemay (2012) that a potential explanation for the support experienced by the parents in HE could be due to a previously "built up bank of emotional capital" (p.1004; Webber 2017; Gottman et al., 2002). This resulted in the partners being able to draw on the 'emotional bank accounts' reserves as they may have to withstand threats to their relationship due to HE participation. All couples in this research engaged in a negotiation and this negotiation was dependent upon their built up emotional capital (Webber, 2017) played a part in them being able to successfully navigate the 'threats to their reality' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) caused by HE participation. For example, was the dinner going to be ready on time, who would read the children a bedtime story, who would do the children's hair before school, who would take the children to the dentist, who would collect the children from school, who would do the laundry?

Gottman et al., (2002) examined relationships between partners and stressed the importance of 'turning towards each other' rather than away from each other in everyday interactions. The partners in this research turned towards each other but the findings point to a situation where this was a process. Many partners initially 'turned away' from each other, only to 'turn back' after the conflict and roles had been ironed out. This finding and the discussion around 'towardness' and 'awayness' is also consistent with the work of Finn (2014, p. 44). One suggestion by Norton et al., (1998) and this is important to note in light of these research findings, is that if mature students' respective partners are made feel part of the HE experience, only then will the partners realise the importance of their support "the aim is to make not break" (p.88).

The findings from this research on role conflict and re-negotiation were also present in previous studies, when mothers engaged in a process to resolve the role conflict which emerged from the experiences of engaging in HE (Moss, 2005; McGivney, 2003; Gouthro, 2005; Alsopa et al., 2008; Webber, 2017; O'Shea, 2015, 2016; Stone & O'Shea 2013; Markle, 2015, Zart, 2019). This research proposed a framework (Fig 10.4) around this role re-socialisation process is apparent in the findings. The research findings were concurrent with the work of Alsop et al., (2008) because the women in my research also felt that the mothering role was theirs and that to a large extent it still was, even though their partner or husband or other family member had taken on this new role. This is in concert with the fitting comments by Coser and Coser (1974) or by Edwards (1993) when they refer to the family as a "greedy institution" where the mother's role is firmly and firstly in the home and any other individualistic endeavours must not interfere with her gendered domestic responsibilities (Koster et al., 2022; Christie et al., 2008; Stone & O'Shea, 2013).

This is also reiterated in the work of Christie et al., (2008) that the gendered discourses are still in society and weigh heavily on women still to this day because children are socialised in the family home into gendered roles from an early age (Koster, et al., 2022).

The Adult child students as FGSs were also navigating barriers, as evident in the findings but not necessarily role re-negotiations like their Parent Students. Inman and Mayes (1999) explain in their research that in order to succeed in HE the FGS's have to choose between their family and HE. This finding was supported in part in the research findings, cleavages did occur between some of the extended family and peer groups (London, 1989; Zwerling & London, 1992) but not in the immediate family. The findings would challenge the position held by Inman and Mayes (1999) when they suggest that the FGS must choose in relation to their immediate family. The findings from my research clearly demonstrate that they did not have to choose. This was due to the protective and supportive effects of the intergenerational dyadic pair engaging in HE concurrently and the Mycorrhizal role the family played as mentioned previously. This meant the students didn't have to make that choice 'between', as they were firmly embedded within the family unit as evidenced in the research findings.

10.3.1 Difficulty "letting go".

Many of the female mother participants explained their difficulties in 'letting go' of their previously held roles within the family. They claimed their previous roles "would not be done the same way that they had done them", or if they were not done *when* they needed to be done and this resulted in the HE parent experiencing guilt (Alsop et al., 2008; Reay, 2003, Brooks, 2015; Webber, 2015; Maynard & Pearsall, 1994; Radhika & Prakash, 1987). Guilt specifically due to the role not being carried out to their exacting standards and it is "just easier for me to do it" (Beagan, et al., 2008). When several of the Parent Student mothers came home and specific tasks in the house were not completed, this would result in conflict. It was a reminder of their absence, or the person who now carried out the role had not completed it to their satisfaction. This then gave rise to guilt and role conflict (Stage 1 Fig 10.4) with their partners (Bianchi et al., 2000; Koster et. al., 2022). Women Student parents in this research had to drop their standards and 'let go' and leave space for someone else to step into their previously held role in the family.

10.3.2 The non-HE Children

One of the primary motivations for including the voices of the Non-HE children in this research was grounded in the recommendations of Wainwright and Marandet's (2010) work which urges researchers to engage with children of parents in education. There has been very little written from the perspective of children who have parents in HE, in the reviewed literature.

HE participation had such an immense impact on their lives, as evidenced in the research findings (9.3.3; 9.4). Therefore, this section in conjunction with the findings in Chapters 7,8 and 9 and the discussion on language in the previous section 10.2.3; demonstrate the impact of Liquid education on the family. Thomas and Quinn (2007) reinforce this point in their work and propose that the most essential factor in determining whether a child will go to HE or not, is to gain an understanding into the relationship between their parental education and the child's education and not to specifically focus on social class. They state it is the 'least explored' and 'least understood' relationship, especially for working class students (Thomas & Quinn, 2007, p. 65) because educational attainment is connected to family origins, including social class.

The mother's absence in the family due to her HE participation was felt strongly by four families. There were emotional reactions in the family focus groups to her absence. The impact of HE participation, on the non-HE children could be summarized from the findings as follows; they had to 'grow up quicker'; they were on their own more; they didn't see their mother as much as previously and they took on more responsibility in the home. This finding was supported by the work of Merrill (1999) in her research, she noted the impact of HE on children was that their independence grew. According to the findings (Section 8.2.3 and 9.3.3) there is a suggestion that this 'growth in independence' may have been out of a necessity to survive the experience, as opposed to an active internal individual pursuit to become independent. Many of the findings suggest that children were left on their own in certain circumstances due to financial constraints on the families. The children had no option but to 'make the dinner' or let themselves 'in after school'. This could be compared to the work of Mannay (2013) which highlights the difficulties navigated in the family between the HE goers and the Non-HE goers, where they find themselves "in the same place but in a very different space" (p.106; Archer & Leathwood, 2003). This quote resonated with the sentiments expressed by the non-HE siblings in the research findings (Section 8.2.3 and 9.3.3).

There was sadness expressed by the younger children (non-HE children); 'I was sad because she couldn't drop me to school' (Sarah) or 'because I missed her she's gone' and Ella's quote "she wasn't in the house as much as she used to be, and yeh I miss her". Many of the non-HE children had tears in their eyes while speaking about their mother in HE. If the mothers included their children in their HE pursuits it was slightly easier for the children but in the main the children's perspective of their parent's participation in HE was negative. The following section explores the stages in the role re-socialisation process.

10.3.3 Stages in the Role Re-socialisation Process

Three distinct stages emerged from the findings associated with role re-socialisation process within the families. Initially there was role conflict:

- Stage 1 - Who does what? then there was a role re-negotiation
- Stage 2 - I'll do this if you do that, let's try that (a transactional 'moment'); this then gave rise to role transformations
- Stage 3 - I now do this.

It was not until the person who previously carried out the role' gave in' or 'let go' of their previously held role, the transformation in role re-distribution occurred. Examples of this can be found in Chapter 8 from Ger (Family 5) explanation of role transformations and the transition to her partner being able to do her daughter's hair and her learning to let go. The role transformations which occurred within all the families gave rise to increased, if not full role symmetry within the family homes, with the exception of Family 3 to a lesser degree, all families went through three stages.

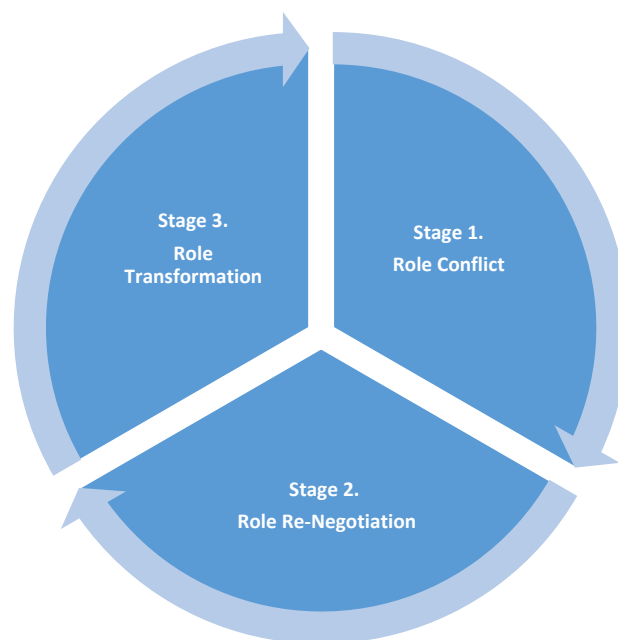


Fig 10. 4 Stages in the Role Transformation Process within Families

The partners or husbands took on the majority of the mother's roles in the home in order for the mother, or child to take on the student role. There was an overlap in the findings on roles and relationships. For some of the Student Parent mothers they held both roles that of Mother and student, they may have aimed to reach the point of compartmentalization (Edwards, 1993; Quinn, 2003) but the research findings suggest that no parent student succeeded in that regard.

One very interesting finding from this research is that once the role negotiation (Radhika & Prakash, 1987) was complete and there was a role transformation, the guilt transferred to the parent who had taken on the new role which was previously carried out by, in most cases by the mother (Evidenced in 8.3.1 Father Gerry).

The notion of guilt or being split between the two roles, as mother and student were also expressed by the mothers; some were not able to leave one role and engage in another.

Ger I'd be sitting there going 'oh God, should I be doing this' and then I'd be checking me phone, do you what I mean and you're taking your phone out in lectures and you miss calls... That was a big, like, I was really guilty".

In the work of Edwards (1993) some of the mature student participants aimed at shutting off the mental presence of their families. The mothers and fathers in this study were unable to shut off or fully separate their families from the HE experience. They all remained connected to their families relying on them for their mycorrhizal role, which was also found in some of the experiences of the women in Edward's (1993) study. They remained connected and were happy to sit in the identity space of being "students who were mother and partners rather than one or the other" (Edwards 1993, p. 90). All the participants of this research fell into this category, they all felt connected to their families but maybe this is because they were in a dyadic pair and had the support of their families therefore they didn't feel it necessary to separate them. The participants in the Share et al., (2013) study felt the need to compartmentalize their 'homeplace' lives which is in opposition to the findings from this research. If the outcome of the role transformation was unsuccessful and there no-one willing to take on the role while the parent was in HE, then potentially there would be a separation of HE and home, in order as one participant expressed to keep 'all the balls in the air' and not to cause conflict. Separateness may be an essential survival mechanism as seen in the work of Edwards (1993) and Share et al., (2013). The work of Quinn (2003) does not apply to the findings from this research because the aim of the female students in Quinn's study was separation of the family and the University, it was a space away from the family. For the participants in this research HE came flooding into the family home in the form of liquid education and the family navigated the disruption and enacted its mycorrhizal role to full effect.

The separation or connection debate above could be interpreted by employing the concept of "finite provinces of meaning" by Berger and Luckmann (1966). This is when a person is "transported into another world"... "only to return to reality" (Berger & Luckmann. 1966, p. 25). An example of this could be a dream state or a child engaged in play. From the findings Section 8.3.1 specifically, Guilt and Roles, Ger gave an example when she keeps checking her phone, as a mother she occupies a different reality from the paramount reality, at various times in HE. This is because in the classroom she makes a "leap" from her participation in the classroom as a student, back to her home and drifts off in thought about her role as mother (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

She 'returns to reality' having turned her attention away from HE back to the home, her reality of everyday life (the home) was difficult for her to escape (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). She used language in the interviews to explain this 'finite province of meaning' and it could be interpreted as her inability to separate her role as student and her role as mother (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 25). The mother was operating in two separate realities, that of the HE classroom (paramount reality) and the home: "me mind would be wandering off in a dream like state wondering if the dishes had been washed or the clothes had been taken out of the machine" (Ger Family 5: 8.3.1). The Mothers experiences are an example of the torn nature of her very being and that her thoughts and reality were dominated by 'the home' and her role as mother. The home was "getting in the way of new internalizations" (p.143). Also suggested by Berger and Luckmann (1966) "by comparison (the home) with it all later realities are artificial" potentially HE was artificial to the women and the real reality of the home, continued to dominate regardless. Food will be discussed next because it is another striking example from the findings of the mycorrhizal role played by the family grappling with the changes in roles, thrust upon it by the liquid education effects on the family.

Roles-Food- "someone had to cook the dinner"

The participants all pointed to food as one of the main sources of constant role conflict (Beagan et al., 2008) and negotiations. Food was discussed and was an emotively charged topic with the families. Food had provided the families with a constant in their lives previously (Poulain, 2017). Food as a theme had been entirely underestimated in the research preparation; its gravity and focus by the participants demonstrated its central role in their lives (James & Curtis, 2010; Poulain, 2017; Pirani et al., 2022). In the voices of the non-HE children it echoed loudly because there was a change who was making the food and when the food would be ready. This signaled a 'crises to the taken for granted reality' of the home, because this 'new normal' and a re-socialisation process were underway (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Food and the time of the dinner gave a temporal rhythm to family life and this disruption was felt by the family members. Food was emotive and caused conflict as the role of food preparation required negotiation and even when the role of food had transitioned to someone else in the family, many of the family members in the families were not happy with the changes (Poulain, 2017; Beagan et al., 2008). The work of Charles and Kerr (1988) was undertaken 30 years ago many of their conclusions still hold true and direct parallels could be drawn about food being the woman's role even if she is studying or working outside the home (Koster et al., 2022; Bianchi et. al., 2000; Coser and Coser, 1974). This was reinforced by Adams and Golsch (2021) which concluded that traditional gender roles still dominate the family home.

The participants taken for granted realities of everyday life were thrown into flux as explained by Gerry “So, that kind of level of taken for granted was huge” (He spoke about this in relation to what his wife did previously before she attended HE) (Father not in HE Family 1) or when David explains “it was taken for granted that Ma will be at home, but now it’s a case of ‘ah, Mam’s not home, so x, y and z must be done’ because we know she’s not at home (Son not in HE Family 1). Further disruptions to the realities of the family members became problematic and this will be examined in the next section (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

10.4 Disruption to the reality of everyday family life

Liquid education had disruptive effects on the pre-HE reality of family life for the participants and it was necessary for the family to activate its mycorrhizal role. The activation of the Mycorrhizal role within the family was an example of the ‘taken for granted reality’ of the family engaging in a re-socialisation process. The aim of the sociology of knowledge was to gain an understanding of the social construction of people’s realities in their everyday lives. It was evident in these findings that HE participation by the dyadic pair has thrown the family into a state of flux and conflict. The families have gone through a re-socialisation process as ‘the taken for granted reality of family life’ has been disrupted to the point where re-socialization occurred to survive, as evidenced in the findings on conflict in the parental relationships over roles 8.2.2 and in section 8.3.1, under the theme of food; and under the topic of role transformations section 8.3.3.

Before the family members engaged in HE participation, there was an order to the family’s reality, there was a temporal rhythm to family life (Pirani et al., 2022), dinner was at a particular time (James and Curtis, 2010; Poulain, 2017; Beagan et al., 2008), people spoke in a particular way, the routines associated with family life (James and Curtis, 2010) and situations were familiar to the family members. Berger and Luckman (1966) would explain that the family members had ‘routinized’ family life, in that you have the knowledge of the family, it is common and familiar to all. As stated in Chp. 5 Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend that as long as everything stays the same and “everyday life continues without interruption” (p.24) it is understood as ‘unproblematic’. Before HE participation by the family members as per their vignettes, in general, life was not perfect but in general family life was unproblematic. HE made family life ‘problematic’ because everyday life and routines changed for everyone. In families ‘the way we do things around here’ become routines because the activity is done again and again it becomes ‘habitualised action’ which then becomes part of the routine and of ‘the stock of knowledge’ within the family (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

When the dyadic pair engaged in HE, the habitualised action was dismantled in the family as the routine was flung into chaos and the stock of knowledge was added to, with a new set of routines, knowledge, language and habitualised actions. As per the research findings in all families, this re-socialisation process took time to settle down.

Everyday life for the family was a 'shared reality' and it was the framework for their encounters and experiences. This framework lies in the patterns and the 'typificatory schemes' embedded within the family's functioning (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). When there was a shift in the patterns due to HE participation this then causes a shift in roles, a re-negotiation occurs and there is a process of re-socialisation. People who engage with each other, engage with the other person's 'typificatory schemes' which may be subject to changes because interactions occur between individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It is through these typificatory schemes that we experience everyday life. The typificatory schemes of the dyadic pair changed due to their HE experiences. Other family members see the changes and engage in dialectical encounters until a new post HE everyday reality is the norm. This process occurred in all families and encompassed from the findings chapters 8.3 the three stages of Roles re-socialization process; Changes in the sibling relationships 8.2.4; Section 9.4. the collective transformations; 9.5.2 HE language and the family.

The symbolic universe is where "the whole world is created" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 96), where realities collide with the marginal, the paramount and where roles are legitimated. Secondary socialisation will be discussed here briefly to highlight 'roles' within the findings from the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (1966). When a child has come to terms with the generalized other, he/she, has a self and a world; only then does primary socialization end and secondary socialization begin. It is secondary socialisation where an individual attains their roles and the knowledge specific to those roles, there the individual internalizes the institution of the family (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The division of labour and roles within the home apart from family 3, were divided along gender lines (Koster et al, 2022; Christie et al, 2008; Stone & O'Shea, 2013). This occurs through the process of the internalization of roles and the associated norms within the family. Secondary socialisation is always dependent upon primary socialisation because one has already internalized the world during primary socialisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The persistence of the internalized world from primary socialisation can cause problems for families experiencing something new like liquid education effects, during the dyadic pair's experiences of HE. In order for the other family members to take on the new roles, it may be suggested within the frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) they must engage in a re-socialisation process to activate the mycorrhizal role within the family.

Due to the changing nature of the 'taken for granted reality' of the participants, there was a 'crisis' experienced by all family members.

This was evidenced in sections 8.3 Role- Re-socialisation; Relationships 8.2.; Sibling relationships 8.2.4; HE in the family home 9.3.2; Collective transformations 9.4 and Language 9.5. This was because the family members faced a “challenge to the socially defined reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 156) in the home, “the place where all human experience is grounded” (Gouthro, 2005, p. 6). This challenge could also be framed using the work of Bourdieu (1999) when he discussed “Hysteresis”, are the families in a state of Hysteresis due to the shifts in the family field conditions? (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 78). Potentially this gives rise to the individuals in HE experiencing a rupture or a “cleavage” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 167) or a *Habitus Clivè* (Cleft habitus) (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 511). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) were referring to individuals and while this research focused on the collective one cannot ignore the ‘severing effects’ of HE as many of the participants noted this rupture, cleavage, habitus clivè or a Hysteresis effect on an individual level and was predominantly felt between peer groups or extended family members (evidenced in Sections; Extended family members 9.3.4.; Peer relationships 8.2.5 and 9.5 Language). All participants gave examples which could be classified by Berger and Luckmann in terms of a cleavage appearing when “a rupture occurs between his visible conduct in the larger community and his invisible self-identification” (1966, p. 167). This was an example of students ‘switching’ ability (Elkins & Hanke, 2018) between HE language and their language before attending HE (Section 9.5.1). This was also evidenced as a shift in the collective reality as it changed due to transformations in the home because of Liquid education (Section 9.4 Collective Transformations).

Two of the participants from separate families explained how members of the extended family were suspicious that they were either going to be analysing them or wanted them to use their HE qualification on them in some way. Some references to this from the findings were “oh you’re doing that psychology”, she says, like, “I better watch what I’m saying” Mary’s sister-in-law said, or Lee’s uncle said ‘when I’m older, will you do a few psychology on me, will you?!’ This gives an insight into some of the extended families’ perceptions of HE and how it could have an impact on their lives due to the dyadic pairs increased knowledge. This finding points to a certain degree of mistrust in the participants increased knowledge. It could also be as Brine and Waller (2004) explain due to the perceived risk associated with the change in identity of the family member in HE and the non HE family member may feel intimidated or threatened by their newly acquired expertise or knowledge.

Within the research findings these points were evidenced in the language themes and played out in ‘conversations’. The family moves through the crisis (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Webb, 2019) where a new reality emerges, and ‘things settle down’. The new reality loses its crisis characteristics and the family moves towards ‘routinization’ of the new reality for both family members engaging in HE and that then becomes the new reality and norms for the family members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This process could lead to what Bourdieu (1999) would refer to as a “transgression” (1999, p.510) or as Berger and Luckmann (1966) would refer to as a “cool alternation”.

This process is not as Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest an extreme alternation when a person's subjective reality is dismantled and an entirely new plausibility structure imparted on the individuals as this would be considered a total transformation such as religious conversions. HE does have an impact on the individuals and the family, but they do not experience a total transformation. The dyadic pair are in fact experiencing a "cool alternation" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.172) because the adult-child student is emotionally dependent on the parent who is also engaging in HE and this 'significant other' is the "guide into the new reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 157). The key point here is because there is a 'significant other' engaging in HE and there are in fact two alternating individuals in the family, the dyadic pair become "yoked together" and they could potentially be a stabilizing influence on the families' reality that is as soon as the new HE reality becomes the norm (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 159). This research highlights because of the dyadic pair's shared participation in HE their relationship moves to a more peer like egalitarian relationship (Branje, 2018). The student of the dyadic pair who attends HE first, takes on the 'guide function', to HE as they gave them the 'heads up' to the second attender and they assist in the socialisation process into HE; this finding extends the work of Branje (2018).

A significant finding from this research is that the family provided the dyadic pair with a stabilizing influence (Clayton et al., 2009). This stabilizing influence or mycorrhizal role played by the family was also found in the work of Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005). Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005) state that living with the family for working class students is a strategy to minimize the risks moving into a new social world. The mycorrhizal role the family played in the process of the dyadic pair engaging in HE was experienced and discussed in the findings as being essential in the successful completion of their degrees. Fleming et al., (2010) found that families provided non-traditional students with the "most valued resource", support (p.10). The family support role came through very strongly in the findings and all families gave credit to the mycorrhizal role played by their families (Strom & Savage, 2014; Stahl et al., 2020, Holton, 2015; Wainwright & Marandet, 2010 and Roman et al., 2008). Abrahams and Ingram (2013) also support this finding, their work highlights that students who live at home, do not experience being caught between two worlds, that of home and university because the family assists in the HE experience not being an "all-encompassing experience"(p.2). The work of Manny (2013) is also relevant to this discussion, because being a 'homebird' while attending HE and remaining close to one's class origins was very important. Mannay (2013) also acknowledged the tensions and internal conflicts associated with social mobility as a result of HE participation for FGS. Tensions and conflicts were experienced by the families in this research but they were negotiated and supported by the overarching family's educational values and mycorrhizal role provided to the dyadic pairs, in order for HE completion to become a new reality for the family.

Several family members in each family explained that they had cut ties with certain individuals because they were destabilizing their 'new reality of HE participation'. For some participants this was perceived as a temptation to return to the non-HE world, 'drop out' and return to their old subjective reality. Several families and family members spoke about disassociating with peers and some extended family members who were not "on the same page" (Evidenced in Section 8.2.5) or did not have the same educational values as they did, they did not want to engage in what Berger and Luckmann (1966) referred to as "backsliding" (p. 159) and return to the old realities where "I don't belong here" in HE. This process is summed up by the words of several participants in section 8.2.5 Peer relationships, "cut ties with friends", "lost touch with them". Employing the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), their friends for some participants could be perceived as 'a threat to their new reality' of HE participation.

In order to survive the HE experience some families created a 'sub society', the dyadic pairs initially, and then the entire family, as they aimed to control the insiders (those who valued education) and outsiders (those who do not see the value in education external to the family) (Lehmann, 2014) in order to deal with the 'cleavage' felt by the family because they valued education and many peers and extended family members did not (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.126). This sub-universe is educated and it is working against the norms of non-HE participation amongst the extended family, peer groups or against an 'entire legitimating machinery' which is trying to keep them in their place, within the symbolic universe because the symbolic universe "puts everything in the right place" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.98). The family had acquired more knowledge and potentially status due to HE participation and therefore could consider anyone who "embodies the threat of nihilation" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 126) as an 'outsider'. In all families their educational values were positively predisposed towards HE and they all rejected the idea that they would be unsuccessful in HE, it was not an option. The final section examines the potential collective transformations which occurred because of the liquid education effects and the mycorrhizal role played by the family.

10.5 Collective Transformations

The findings from this research present an opportunity to utilize the invisible, make it visible, as there were collective familial transformations uncovered. One in which familial values around education have been legitimized and reinforced, all family members have been transformed by the HE experiences of the dyadic pairs. While this is tentative, there were numerous examples from the research findings which could be interpreted as evidence of collective transformations (section 8.2 Relationships; 8.3 Roles and 9.4 Collective transformations; 9.5 Language) (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010; Webber 2015; Hoggan et al., 2017).

LE could be understood as a collective transformation because of the mycorrhizal role played by the family in the HE process. The families were embedded within the dyadic pairs HE experience and played a vital role in the individual transformations which took place. The non-HE family members also experienced a transformation in their HE aspirations, language, roles and norms around education in the home.

One parent student (Precious) in HE spoke about the way that her HE knowledge had changed the way both her and her husband parented; a finding which is supported in the work of Webber (2015). She changed the way she communicated with her children and instead of shouting she used more 'dialogue' now. In accounts from three families the mothers in HE suggested that if they involved their children in their HE experience, it mitigated the negative impact of HE because their children then knew where they were and they knew what they were doing. It is important that parents 'bring their children to the HE table' to ease the socialisation into HE and to make them feel part of the process. This also links back to the concept of the sharing of 'domain specific knowledge' context and experience in that the family members are experiencing HE (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Many of the non-HE children spoke about how their perception of their parent in HE had changed, from the past to the present. Some suggested that they agreed with their parent and that their mother moved from being from 'invisible (Daniels, 2010; Marandet & Wainwright 2009; Edwards, 1993; Luttrell, 1997) to visible'. This finding was noted by two families as the mothers spoke about this process. For one family the Non-HE children noted that their mother had moved from being 'dumb to smart' and this was a collective observation. This point was reinforced by Stone and O'Shea (2013) their research points to a change in perspectives of the children who had parents in HE and noted that engaging in HE meant that they were now treated with more respect by their children, due to their increased knowledge.

There was strong evidence in the findings across four families that due to the mother's participation in HE, the father spent more time with his children. The father made the dinners, brought them to the dentist, did homework and generally took on many of the roles previously fulfilled by the mother. There were changes in the husband's parenting practices which then had an impact on his relationship with his children (Webber, 2015) which is an example of a collective transformation. The findings from four families, suggest that the fathers went through Webber's (2015) (Chapter 4 Fig 4.1) Cycle of transformation for husbands. The participant's husbands observe changes in their partner's identity, new parenting schemes were taken on by the husbands, and the husbands then construct new behaviors and ways of being a parent (Webber, 2015). This was evident in the research findings (Sections 8.3 and 9.4) and is evidenced in the role changes and transformation of the relationships between the fathers, their partners and their children. Michael from Family 5 suggested that the experience of HE on the family could be broken into three steps. HE 1. Tore the family apart; 2. Caused them to rejig things; 3. Brought them back together again.

Relationships between parents were transformed, family roles went through a transformation, children were forced to become more independent and some forced transformations occurred. The Adult Child student had an impact on their siblings, extended family and their friends. Two families explained that due to the HE experience the siblings 'rely on each other more' or even have 'to talk to each other'; 'help them with their homework' or even encouraging their sibling to go to school (Davies, 2015; Altmejd et. al., 2020; Grgic & Bayer, 2015; Kaczynski 2011). The experience brought two of the families' siblings closer together and highlighted the role and importance of the sibling relationship (Davies 2015). The HE participation of the dyadic pairs ignited an interest in all siblings towards HE participation. All siblings expressed an interest in attending HE after experiencing their family member's engagement. Many of the adult child students knew that they were role models for their siblings in the initial stages of HE. This finding highlights the important underutilized role of the 'sibling effect' in HE especially for FGS and families. As discussed in detail in Chapter 4 the spillover effects or multiplier effects of sibling participation are noted by Altmejd et al., (2020); Grgic & Bayer, (2015), the chain enrollment effects of siblings (Kaczynski, 2011) and their impact on their siblings HE choice (Davies, 2015), these authors outlined the impact sibling participation in HE can have on their brothers and sisters. The findings from this research do point to a sibling effect and this was evidenced in the conversations between the siblings in the family focus groups in their aspirations to attend HE because their sibling had and in the knowledge which they expressed that they had attained about the processes involved in HE. The findings on peer impact add to the quantitative research of Altmejd, et al., (2020) in that it gave details of the information transmitted to siblings at a micro level of interaction, something that was missing from their university choice research.

This research presents an opportunity to look at transformation as a collective process of re-socialisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) because "so far everything that has been said on socialisation implies the possibility that subjective reality can be transformed" (p.157). The collective transformation links to the work of Hoggan et al., (2017) when they introduce intersubjectivity to Mezirow's theory of transformation, in order to address and highlight that "human experience is first and foremost intersubjective" (p.54).

Intersubjectivity is an important consideration in light of the findings because there are overlaps in the discussion of Hoggan et al., (2017) and that of Berger and Luckmann (1966) as previously explored but it is worth noting again. Berger and Luckmann (1966) discuss intersubjectivity throughout their work and it acts like a load bearing beam because they emphasise the intersubjective nature of the relational. It is evident in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) discussion on Language, conversations, primary socialisation, secondary socialisation and the relational in their theory, one needs another, intersubjectively. The creation of reality is in many instances the creation of a shared reality. As explained previously the shared experience of HE had a bonding effect on the dyadic pair.

Hoggan et al., (2017) would concur with this because they explain that due to the shared experiences and meaning perspectives of people it “serves to maintain our social connections and the fundamental feeling of belonging and being accepted by others” (Hoggan, 2017, p. 56). The family was the ‘safe harbour’ for the dyadic pairs they were anchored to it and it served the purpose of re-affirming the new higher education reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

According to Hoggan et al., (2017) the family is where family members can be accepted for who they are, a space which provides an opportunity for collective reflection and push individualistic transformations. From this research it is clear that the family not only assisted the individual transformations (intersubjectively) but also the family itself experienced a collective transformation. The disequilibrium experienced by families caused by liquid education and the mycorrhizal role enacted by the family, finds its equilibrium again but the family does not return to the same family prior to the HE experience; the participants reiterated that ‘things are different now’. The pursuit of seeking equilibrium as Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest is because human beings have a drive for certainty and the reestablishment of institutionalized certainty, for an established order of family life; seeking and maintaining their ‘universe’.

Conclusion

The dyadic pair’s experiences in HE caused a shift in the taken for granted reality of everyday life for all family members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It throws roles into flux, relationships into crises due to the role changes and results in both positive and negative experiences for all family members. If the family was not the filter and did not occupy the space in between the individual and HE then it would be left unaffected by the HE experience of its members; its effects would reside solely within the individual. This was not the case according to the research findings because families are relational and dynamic, the HE experiences of the dyadic pairs disrupted the taken for granted reality of everyday life for all family members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966)

Alsop et al., (2008) exclaim that the university strips the individuals of their family and social contexts and the findings would concur with that. This research extends the work of Alsop et al., (2008) and introduces a consideration, that just because the university strips the students of their family and social contexts, this does not mean that the students strip themselves of their HE contexts and experience at home. Instead the findings very clearly suggest that they bring LE into the family home. The students’ home experiences may be invisible (Daniels, 2010; Marandet & Wainwright, 2009; Edwards, 1993) or ignored (Gouthro, 2005) by the HE institutions, but the findings from this research strongly point to the situation that HE is very visible, experienced and comprehended by all family members.

The students do in fact bring HE home in the form of liquid education and the family members in order to survive activate its mycorrhizal role because the family sits in the space in-between HE and the individual. HE occurs in the midst of a complex web of interconnections between individuals and their families. The following section will attempt to bring this research to a conclusion.

CHAPTER 11 CONCLUSION

11.1 Introduction

This chapter will revisit my original contribution to knowledge and also discuss the utilization of the theoretical frame of Berger and Luckmann (1966) as a classification and analytical tool for working with the research findings. I will examine the implications of the findings at a micro – practice, meso- institutional, and macro- policy level. The limitations of the research and recommendations for further research are also discussed. The chapter will conclude with a reflexive letter to my grandparents about the research journey and what I have personally learned as a researcher and teacher. I will draw on the work of both Richard Hoggart and Seamus Heaney to facilitate the concluding section.

My original contribution to knowledge was uncovering and exploring a ‘cold spot’ in HE research, namely the experiences of FGF where an intergenerational dyadic pair were engaging in HE. The Liquid HE effects on the family and the activation of the mycorrhizal role of the family were uncovered.

11.2 Original Contribution to knowledge

To date the dominant ideology around HE is that we have been educating individuals atomised from their families. This research extends this perspective of the limited individualistic view of HE and moves the conversation to consider the collective impact of HE on the family. To atomise FGS from their context, of both family and community is ill advised and will not contribute to their completion of HE. This research introduces new concepts which could prove useful for future research; ‘Liquid Education’ effects, the conversation about the ‘in-between’ nature of the family, which culminated in a discussion of the concept the ‘Mycorrhizal role’ activated by the family in order to survive the HE experience.

The findings affirm the position that the family sits, in-between HE and the individual, occupying the liminal. The mycorrhizal role as tentatively suggested in this research points to the supports, capitals and re-negotiation of roles provided by the family to the dyadic pairs. As discussed in prior Chapters 3, 5, 9 and 10, the family acted as ‘a filter’ (Gouthro, 2005; Berger & Luckmann, 1966) which suggests that the family provided essential ‘buffering effects’ to the HE experience of the dyadic pairs. The family, engaged in a re-socialisation process to make way for HE in the home (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This happened when the family activated its mycorrhizal role to withstand the crises and disruptions to the pre-HE everyday reality of the home due to HE participation of the dyadic pairs.

I would argue that it is time for HE to make space for the family in its institutions because to date the family has been pushed to the margins with limited acknowledgement of the role it plays in both HE policy and practice in Ireland. The concept of 'Liquid HE' effects sits as an overarching framework to investigate further and expand this research to other families in HE, potentially focusing on culture and potentially men, maybe single parents. Liquid education as a sensitising concept may facilitate the conceptualisation and understanding of the dynamic, collective, relational nature of HE. The incorporation of 'mycorrhizal roles' as a concept shines a light on the positive benefits the family provides for its members engaging in HE. This research has hopefully served to positively influence HE institutions, policies and practice to capitalise on the family's mycorrhizal role and potential multiplier effect of liquid education (Altmejd et al., 2020; Grgic & Bayer, 2015; Kaczynski 2011). If it becomes the norm for FGF to attend HE the Liquid Education effects could potentially lead to social mobility and intergenerational social class mobility as a result, this is a powerful focus for future contemplation. It was very clear from this research that it is the values the family holds towards education rather than solely their social class, has the greatest influence on the student participants.

Transformations come to the fore in this research and while as previously stated this was not an initial research objective nor was it a research question, the findings cannot be ignored in light of the theoretical frame and the previous discussions in Chapter 10, and Section 10.5 in particular. It could be argued with further research and theoretical examination that there has been a collective transformation within the family, the findings from this research certainly point to one. All families experienced role, relationship and language transformations, all families now see the family differently because of their collective experiences. These transformations happened within the family home; it was shocked, disrupted, broken apart to a certain degree, while acknowledging the individual transformations which occurred within the identities of the dyadic pairs. To underestimate the collective transformations which occurred in the family home would be remiss from both an empirical and theoretical perspective.

Chapter 2 where I discussed policy, it was included to demonstrate three things; firstly the absence of the family in HE policy and secondly the positive effects HE policy has had at a macro level in facilitating and pushing the phenomenon under investigation. Thirdly, because it was necessary to scope and locate the micro lived experiences of families in HE within the macro HE policy landscape, while acknowledging this is not a policy dominated piece of research. However, policy was important to include as within the contemporary landscape of Irish HE policy has a significant conditioning affect in relation to how (and indeed whether or not) student's experience and engage in HE. Chapter 3 and 4 of the literature review firmly focused on the family and HE with set parameters around sociologically relevant literature and in the main qualitatively derived research.

Chapter 3 and 4 examined six key thematic areas:

1. First Generation Students (Terminology, FGS Experiences, Barriers)
2. The transition (Linguistic Transition; Geographic Transition; the in-between)
3. Theoretical Insights
4. Relationships (Parental, Parents and Children; Siblings; extended family)
5. Roles in the home and HE
6. Transformations

This thesis employed Berger and Luckmann (1966) as the theoretical frame; I also presented a synthesis of various other theoretical frames as part of the literature review and in the Discussion Chapter 10. It was essential to situate this research amongst the valuable and inspirational work of others at an empirical and theoretical level, to build upon them, as they serve to provide a very solid foundation for the research. The next section will examine the original research questions and how the thesis answered these questions.

11.3 A Return to the Research Questions

This section briefly concludes the research questions and revisits them to ensure that they have in fact been answered. In answering the research questions with reference to the Discussion Chapter 10 they fall under the two concepts. They are Liquid education and Mycorrhizal role, *Question 1* which focused on Relationships is discussed with Roles. This is because there were such significant overlaps between roles and relationships. If there was a change in roles this resulted in a change in the relationship. In order for a change in role to occur there may have been conflict in the relationships; they were heavily intertwined. Roles and Relationships were also where you could see evidence of the liquid education effects and how the family activated its mycorrhizal role. I have separated them out for the concluding remarks on the research questions below. Question 3, 4 and 5 were primarily discussed under the Mycorrhizal role of the family discussed in Chapter 10. Positive educational socialisation facilitated the liquid education flowing into the family. The family home experienced the liquid education effects in a tangible way. Language was one way the liquid education effects (Section 1.5) were experienced by all family members and this is discussed below under Question 5 and 11.4 The Theoretical Frame.

11.3.1 Question 1.

How does the participation in HE of two family members impact relationships within the family unit?

The family is built on the relationships which reside within it and create it. It is in a constant state of relational negotiation and when the dyadic pair engages in HE it throws the family relationships into a period of conflict and renegotiation as demonstrated in the findings Chapter 7, 8 and 9. The family has socialised its members into society and the process by which this had occurred was through the relationships in the primary and secondary socialisation process. This research confirms this point made by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in that through the socialisation process all dyadic pairs have the same outlook on education and this permeates all family members in all families. Relationships within the family have changed due to the HE participation of the dyadic pair. The relationship between the dyadic pair shifted due to their joint experience.

This research highlighted that which was noted in the work of Branje (2018) that due to their shared participation the dyadic pair's relationships changed to a more peer-like egalitarian dynamic. The findings on the student of the dyadic pair who attended HE first, added to the work of Branje (2018) and extends it to consider the 'guide function', who gives the 'heads up' to the second attender and how they assist in the socialisation process into HE. In relation to the relationship between the dyadic pairs they supported each other and they both benefited from the joint participation. This is confirmed in the work of Share and Carroll (2013). The fact that this information transfer happened and it was a two way process confirms the work of Edwards (2004) and Thomas and Quinn (2007).

The relationships between the parents in the family were subjected to pressure and conflict and were navigated to varying degrees within each family. If the partners had a build-up of emotional capital this helped sustain the relationship in this time of crises as the re-negotiations around fitting HE into the family home took place. This is in concert with the findings of Webber (2017); Gottman et al, (2003) and Feeney and Lemay, (2012). This research extended this conversation into the micro lived experiences of the participants and how they navigated this on the ground every day. One participant withdrew sex as a form of control in order to get buy-in from her husband; another participant observed that the family home had changed and this forced the non-HE children to query if they are in fact in the right house. That demonstrated how much the home environment had changed due to the HE experience of the dyadic pair. All partners provided support even when there was conflict, this was deemed very important to the HE participants.

The voices of the non-HE children were examined and heard in the family focus groups. This was important, as their perspectives on their parents and siblings experiences of HE has not previously been captured in HE research.

As such these research findings extend our knowledge of this largely invisible domain. These findings were not necessarily positive in that tentatively the HE experience of the parent was not perceived in an affirmative light and caused emotional upset in the lives of the non-HE children. HE participation also created a void in the lives for some of the non-HE children which was filled by the other parent. However for some this was not the case and they had to navigate this void on their own. This specific area would benefit from further research which specifically focuses on capturing the voices of the non-HE children of parents and siblings in HE.

HE participation resulted in changes in the way the parents parented. This finding was consistent with the findings of Webber, (2015). There was a shift in the way the children perceived their parent who was in HE and these findings were consistent with the work of Daniels, 2010; Marandet and Wainwright (2009); Edwards, (1993) and Stone and O'Shea, (2013). Relationships changed between the non-HE parent and their children because of the increased time they now spent with their children due to the other parent being in HE. It was evident in the findings that all families were not just completing HE for themselves they were also doing it for their extended families and this finding was supported in the work of Andrade, (2013); Tett, (2000); Finn, (2017). Some extended family members viewed HE as a threat and for some it changed the way their extended families treated them, due to their increased knowledge and language.

11.3.2 Question 2.

How does the participation of two family members in higher education affect the family and the roles within the family?

Roles in the family were thrown into chaos, they were challenged and renegotiated to make space for HE in the family home and to facilitate the family members to engage in HE. There was significant role conflict to be navigated and the role conflict was experienced by many family members. The role conflict and re-negotiation experienced by predominantly women as they engaged as mothers in HE was also found within this research. This finding is supported in the work of Moss 2005; McGivney, 2003; Gouthro 2005; Alsopa et al., 2008; Webber 2017; O'Shea 2015, 2016; Stone and O'Shea 2013; Markle, 2015, Zart 2019. This research extends their research and suggests that there are collective transformations at play. It tentatively suggests a framework and stages of the participants' experiences. Here it is framed as a three stage role re-socialisation process consisting of: role conflict, role negotiation and role transformation. When role transformations occurred for the participants some of them still found it very difficult to 'let go' and while they may have been in HE physically, mentally sometimes they drifted to the home reality as discussed in Chapter 11 as the home dominated for the participants.

The work of Inman and Mayes (1999) suggested that the FGS must in fact choose between their families and HE in order to succeed. The findings from this research would challenge this finding. The findings from this research suggest that because the students had another family member in HE may be why they didn't have to 'choose between' in order to succeed. It was mostly the mothers in the study who had immense difficulty 'letting go' of their previously held role in the family in order to make way for HE participation. The mothers also experienced a significant amount of guilt because of their decision to attend HE; this finding confirms the previous findings of Brooks (2015); Webber (2015); Maynard and Pearsall, (1994); Radhika and Prakash, (1987). In order for the mothers to be able to 'let go' even to a small degree meant that they all spoke about having to drop their standards in order to make space for their partner to take on some of the roles previously held and dominated by them. In order for the families in this study to succeed in HE the role equalisation process occurred in all families. The mothers in this study felt connected to their families and did not feel like they needed to shut off their mothering role in order to succeed in HE. The findings of this research would challenge the work of Quinn (2003) because the mothers in this research did not feel the need to separate their family and university experiences unlike the mothers in Quinn's research. The parents and their children in this research did arrive into HE with invisible virtual handbags full to the brim of knowledge and experience; a finding which concurs with the work of Daniels (2010). The homeplace as per the findings is invisible in the HE sphere as it has not been designed for FGS of all ages with differing levels of familial responsibilities.

The shifts in role within the home were captured in the research findings, but the most notable area of change was around the preparation and cooking of food. When there were changes to this routine and concomitant roles it disrupted the entire cluster of family norms (Pirani et al., 2022; James & Curtis, 2010; Poulain, 2017; Beagan et al., 2008). As Adams and Golsch (2021) noted in their research that traditional gender roles still dominate the home, and in light of the research findings around food in the home and the associated roles, then it is understandable that disruptions to the dinner created heightened familial tensions. Food was identified as one of the most important disrupted components of the HE experience by all family members across all families.

11.3.3 Question 3:

**How does educational socialisation within the family between family members take place?
What are the family's educational values? (10.2.2)**

The positive values held by all family members towards education were experienced in the home and this had a positive impact on the aspirations of family members towards education. These findings were supported by the work of Spiegler and Bednarek, 2013; West, 1996; Reay, 2000; Gofen, 2009; Kupfer, 2012.

These findings extend the work of the previous mentioned authors because it gives examples of the “how” of this process of educational socialisation. The how is answered by the repetitive narratives experienced in the family home. These positive educational conversations occurred across all families (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and in several instances contained messages about what they should not do: ‘end up on the dole’, ‘not end up in the flats’, and ‘not to end up on the building sites’; it was just not an option. The families’ values were transmitted to all family members as repetitive sentences throughout the primary socialisation process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) which also had an impact on the previous point made about educational aspirations (Copper, 2017; Webb, 2019; McEldowney, 2003). Parents across all families invested in their children’s education by attending parent teacher meetings, serving on boards of management, choosing the best school for their child rather than the local school and investing time in homework and projects. The parents were positively predisposed towards education this translated into the children in all cases being positive about education and its potential (Apple, 1982; West, 1996; Reay, 2000; Gofen, 2009; Kupfer, 2012; Department of Health and Children, 2009).

Families contended that education would open up doors and secondly that they must study something that they must ‘love’. Employing the funds of knowledge framework (Kiyama, 2010; Moll et al., 2002;) was valuable because it provided valuable insights into the creation of familial ideologies and their impact on family members and moved the conversation away from FGS being at ‘a deficit’ acknowledging that they have accumulated bodies of knowledge, but that it is not valued in HE. The participants did experience ‘limiting educational ideologies’ from their extended family members and peer groups (Kiyama, 2010) but noting not from their immediate families. This could be an example and link to the concluding remarks under 12.5 and the discussion on the ‘sub-universe’ which the family created in order to repel alternative realities or threats presented by peer groups or extended family members against HE participation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

11.3.4 Question 4:

Does Higher education come into the family home?

Liquid education served as an overarching theme in the Discussion Chapter 10 Section 10.2 and encompassed many of the liquid education effects on roles and relationships and how the family activated its mycorrhizal role in order to deal with the disrupting effects of liquid education on the home. Many of these effects have been examined under the previously discussed questions, roles and relationships above Q.1 and Q.2. This section will conclude specifically how the liquid education was experienced in the home. While language was discussed as an example of liquid education in the home this will be discussed under question 5 below. The family home was the context where the liquid education effects were experienced by all family members.

The tone towards education was set, liquid education permeated the home and facilitated the transmission of the positive impact of education, this finding is in concert with the work of Wainwright and Marandet (2010). LE was embedded within the fabric of the family home; books, sticky notes on the walls, project work, new language, spatial impact (study areas), rules of engagement with the dyadic pair (tea, coffee, silence). Employing the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) the books and the sticky notes in the family home were considered as 'symbolic objects' and employed by the participants as part of a reaffirmation process of knowledge attained, which served as a confirmation to them and 'outsiders' of what they were trying to achieve.

The 'significant others' as identified in the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) play a central role in education as does the family home itself. The family home according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) is potentially in the way of all new learning due to its primacy in the primary socialisation process. Maybe lecturers and teachers are competing with the reality of the home when imparting new knowledge, since the home is where "all human experience is grounded" (Gouthro, 2005, p. 6).

The participants very clearly benefitted from going to a local institution (Finn, 2014; Reay et al., 2005; Manny, 2013; Barker 1972; Cullinan et al., 2013) which also explains how they could tap into the mycorrhizal role the family played in their HE journey. The support, the redistribution of the roles, the conversations in the home, all gave rise to building the dyadic pair a foundation in the home which meant the family facilitated their HE participation. Gravitating to a local institution proved to be a very valuable decision for the dyadic pairs, the family occupying the in-between space meant that the students did not have to choose between the family and HE (Mannay, 2013).

11.3.5 Question 5:

How does the language and or knowledge acquisition in Higher education impact the FGS and does it have an influence on the immediate and extended family?

The findings on language were discussed in Chapter 10 Section 10.2.3 because they were an exemplary example of liquid education effects on the family. HE language permeated the family home and all family members experienced it (O'Shea, 2015; 2016). The HE experience was shared by the family members and the new language became sedimented (Berger & Luckmann, 1966): while it may have been experienced by proxy by the non-HE family members, their experience was different, they experienced it nonetheless in a derived manner. The family could be considered the safe space where alternate understandings can emerge, because the family holds the ship steady, provides continuity, while the dyadic pairs engage in HE (Hoggan, et al., 2017).

In Chapter 10 Section 10.2.3 a seven stage collective language acquisition process was discussed (1) Language shock (2)Coasting (3)Testing (4)Connecting (5)External Discontent (6) Breaking Down (7) Switching. They gave detailed examples of their new skill of being able ‘to switch’ (Elkins & Hanke, 2018) between their newly acquired knowledge and language, to their previous status or previous accepted ways of speaking and knowing. This “switching” capability was necessary because the FGS were surrounded by many friends and family members who did not understand their new language and knowledge and so to minimize ‘cleavage’ felt, all participants involved developed the ability to be able to ‘switch’ back or ‘a return to reality’ to their previous un-educated self (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The newly acquired language gave all participants more power. Power shifted in relationships between mothers and their partners. The mothers became more powerful and their acquired knowledge changed their “position in the relationship” and notably at times of conflict (Webber 2015; Suitor, 1987). There was a connection between HE language and social class for the participants (Michaels et al., 2016). From how they perceived other students and their social class (Bernstein, 1960; Preece, 2015; Bourdieu et al., 1994; Michaels et al 2016) to how their extended families and friends perceived them because of their H.E experience, knowledge and language used. The dyadic pair’s ‘mode of speech’ had changed and this linguistic transition was obvious and observed by the extended family (Bernstein, 1960; Merrill, 2015; Preece, 2015).

The severing effects of the newly acquired language was only felt by the participant with their peer groups and extended families, it was not felt within the immediate family. The participants were not sitting on the margins of their immediate family as discussed by Zwerling and London, (1992); Hoggart, (1958); Bourdieu, (1999); Fleming, (2013) because they had gone to a local institution and they availed of the dyadic pair support. They were also experiencing the mycorrhizal role (collective absorptive capacity or buffering effects) of the family, which helped them navigate their HE experiences. Their families were fully embedded within their HE experiences as evidenced in the research findings.

11.4 The Theoretical Frame

The theoretical frame employed in the research examined in Chapter 5 provided an in-depth discussion on the theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Berger and Luckmann (1966) concentrated on the socialisation process, the family and the central role it plays in the primary socialisation process. There were a number of key concepts introduced by Berger and Luckmann (1966) which assisted in the interpretation of the research findings presented in the discussion Chapter 10.

These facilitated both confirming tentatively and extending our understanding of what was occurring in the family due to HE participation of the dyadic intergenerational pairs. While the theoretical lens of Berger and Luckmann (1966) provided a very useful and applicable framework for analysis, it did not provide insights into the psychological dimension of the experiences of the participants, but this was not the focus for this research as it focused on the sociological and in the main, the collective experiences.

The next section will provide a summative conclusion on the work of Berger and Luckmann and how their theory assisted in the interpretation of the research findings. The HE experience led to a redefinition of the families' shared reality by the family members. It emphasised the role of the 'significant other' in the relationship of the dyadic pairs and the other non-HE family participants. It provided a focus on the primary and secondary socialisation processes. Due to the fact that the dyadic pair had an emotional attachment to each other and experienced HE together this led to 'bonding effects' due to the shared experience. The HE experience was 'sedimented intersubjectively' within the family and the HE language and knowledge had become part of the 'common stock of knowledge' within the family (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This was because HE knowledge was transmitted linguistically through conversations. The non-HE family members devised ways of deciphering the dyadic pair's 'domain specific knowledge' and this gave rise to 'semantic fields' experienced by all family members, as the conversations occurred in the home between the dyadic pairs, they were witnessing the liquid education effects (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

It was also suggested that the conversation around HE transition needs to shift towards a discussion about a *socialisation process into HE*, one that has no end. It is continual and includes a re-socialisation process into and post HE participation because the individual has become 'educated' (Hoggart, 1958). They must navigate as a FGS between the 'educated' and those who have not had an opportunity to engage in HE. It was evident for some of the families that they were resisting the norms of non-HE participation in their communities or extended families. It was very tentatively suggested that the dyadic pair created a 'sub-universe' of HE in the home to resist 'the threats' posed by the norm of non-HE participation as discussed under Question 3 above (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Potentially the family itself is revolting against their social class norms of non-HE participation and seeking to re-socialise with the assistance of HE participation and completion; access to a career which may mean for some a new social class or one different to their origins. In order to achieve this many of the families rejected input from people who challenged their values of HE and who also 'posed a threat to their new reality' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept of "finite provinces of meaning" (p. 25) provided an interpretative tool to understand the torn nature of the female mothers.

They experienced being physically present in the institution but wandering off to another reality, of the home. Wondering if the laundry was done, feeling guilty about not being there, or working out what they were having for dinner, all while in class. They carried their role of mother into HE and the home “was in the way” of being able to experience HE fully because HE was perceived as artificial, secondary and the home reality was real and dominated all other realities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 143). The family lives of the participants were thrown into ‘crises’ and disrupted to the point that re-socialisation occurred as a necessity for the family itself to survive. This survival involved role re-negotiation, relationship re-definitions, and the taken for granted reality of family life reconstructed and transformed. There was an interruption to family life and it had changed due to HE participation. The ‘habitualised actions’ in the family were not habitual anymore, there was a disruption which necessitated the family negotiating a “new way of doing things around here”. The family may be experiencing a ‘cool alternation’, members have been re-socialised into a new post-HE familial reality of experiencing liquid HE effects (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Due to the repetitive conversations around familial educational values meant that it was through these that positive attitudes and orientations were transmitted to the next generation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). There was an increase in the familial ‘stock of knowledge’ due to the liquid effects of HE permeating the home (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The knowledge exchange in the family home may mean that all family members gain exponentially from the dyadic pair’s experience in HE. As stated in Discussion Chapter 10 Part 1 “experience is designated and transmitted linguistically however it becomes accessible and strongly relevant to individuals who have not gone through it” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 68). From this quote it could be concluded that the non-HE members of the family experience the benefits and ‘relevance’ of HE even though they have not experienced it formally but informally in the family home.

The changed language in the home as discussed above under Question 5, is another example of a perceived ‘disruption’ to the ‘taken for granted’ nature of reality in the family home (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The family home was potentially where ‘returns to reality occur’, a place where continuity and collective adaptations happen in order for the new reality to be sustained for all family members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hoggan, et al., 2017). The increase in the dyadic pairs’ “domain specific knowledge” meant that for all participants they navigated collective language acquisition, as liquid education flowed into the family, extended family members and peer groups.

It could also be suggested as per the discussion on collective transformations in Chapter 10 and above under contribution to knowledge that the family experienced a collective process of re-socialisation which resulted in collective transformations, while also highlighting the role in which the family may have provided for the individuals in their transformation process providing a safe space to reflect on their individual transformation process (Hoggan et al., 2017) by activating its mycorrhizal role.

This finding provides an opportunity to extend the work of both Hoggan et al., (2017) and Mezirow in order to consider the collective transformations underway by families where members are engaging in HE. The collective transformations occurred across roles, perception of HE, relationship transformations, transformations to the language in the home, transformations in the perception of the dyadic pair within the family and transformations in the everyday lived experiences of all family members. The relational dimensions to the collective transformations meant that the process of how the family members viewed the dyadic pairs shifted. Individuals went from being perceived by other family members as 'invisible to visible', from powerless to powerful, 'dumb to smart' and from 'not being taken seriously to being taken seriously'. These tentative transformations place an emphasis on the role of the intersubjective in the transformative process. The collective transformation culminated in the families being torn apart, which necessitated in them collectively rejigging things and then put the family back together.

The incorporation of Berger and Luckmann (1966) had brought various strengths to both the methodological road this thesis travelled along and in the interpretation of the research findings. However, their theory had shortcomings because it did not provide a micro level framework for the analysis of for example the mycorrhizal role the family played and how roles shifted from one person to another, other than a macro framing of a re-socialisation process as discussed in Chapter 5. As many of their critics have discussed their lack of a conceptualisation of 'power in their theory is problematic (Bourdieu, 1991), the point was made by both Boss et al., (1993) and Ristic (2019) that if one connects power to knowledge then because power is always connected to knowledge then this criticism falls short, considering the details with which they consider knowledge and its social construction (Boss et al., 1993; Dreher, 2019; Ristic, 2019; Foucault, 1980; Swidler & Ardit, 1994). Sica (2016) noted that they placed too much emphasis on childhood and neglected to consider the more macro social forces in society. As posed in Chapter 5 potentially they focused on the most powerful institution, the family, the one which all other social institutions are dependent upon. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) over emphasis on the socialisation process was a good fit for this research because it focused on the relational and the socialisation process, which resides within the family as some very valuable insights were garnered by employing this framework. This research also must acknowledge as in Chapter 5, their lack of an in-depth critical explicit conceptualisation of power. They did not examine power dynamics and how inequalities influence the social construction of reality.

11.5 Extendibility -Implications of findings on the micro, meso and macro.

This research will hopefully have an impact on how HE is perceived by academics, policy makers and HE institutions because historically it has been framed as an individual pursuit, when in fact the findings point to a collective endeavour. The next section is divided into the potential implications

or extendibility of the research findings. It is divided into the micro practice level implications and recommendations for implementation.

The meso level recommendations point to how HEIs can assist in fully embedding the family and the valuable role it plays in the lives of the students and recognising the impact it has on completion. The macro policy level recommendations point the policy makers and researchers to the valuable contribution the family can bring to HE policy at national and international level. To perceive the family as invisible may be simpler in relation to educational planning and investment, but it is to ignore the fact that students and their educational pursuits for the majority, are fully embedded into the lives of their families. The following examines the implications of this research from a micro, meso and macro perspective.

11.5.1 Micro-Practice

From a practice perspective, the lecturers in HE could use the following and incorporate some of the findings into their practice when the evidence from this research points to liquid HE effects.

- Academics to gain an understanding that FGS have knowledge and it could be a very valuable to open up the students 'virtual handbags' and incorporate them into the HE experience grounding and hooking their learnings to their pasts (Craik and Lockhart, 1972; Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020; Kiyama, 2010). This could be incorporated into case studies in class; the use of examples in class and for projects from the students lived experiences; more in class discussion to validate their experiences and maybe credits attributed to prior experiences and learning which did not occur in formal education.
- CPD for lecturers on how to bring HE home and bring the Home into HE
- Involve the family in Continuous assessments. I have incorporated this into my teaching practice.
- Communication to family members coming up to exams
- Link and embed the family into lecturing material especially in year one.
- Bring family members into lectures at the beginning of term.
- Each lecturer devises a language guide to their module with key words and phrases used throughout the module with definitions etc., to ease the students into the academic language in HE

11.5.2 Meso- Institutional level

In summary the following could be implemented at an institutional level to assist members of families as they engage in HE.

- Timetables parent and student friendly, take into consideration the necessity for students to work, while attending HE
- Bring your children to class day
- Library facility for parents to loan books for family members so they too feel connected to the university experience (GUI 2009).
- Set up a family engagement office in all HE institutions
- Recordings of bed time stories to kids when parents in HE These recordings can be brought home by parents on loan and returned like library books.
- Food for families at a discounted price – help with the meal tensions experienced
- Counselling services for mature students experiencing relationship conflict due to HE participation.
- Bring Family into the induction process- ‘we are in this together’ message, that these students will need you (the family).
- Family days on campus
- Mature student parent network (formalised and funded)
- Support groups for partners of students
- Induction counselling for students and partners, in advance of term beginning.
- Academic writing and language support for FGS to increase linguistic capital (O’Reilly 2008, Lareau, 2000)
- Award for families in HE ‘Dyadic pair’ call them out at graduation.

11.5.3 Macro- Policy level

This research should stretch the notion of inclusion and who is included in the education process, as families for too long have been kept out of HE. There has been a shift in home school relations at primary and secondary level but this is notably absent at HE. A child does not cease being someone’s child at 18 years of age they are your child for life and the influence if there is a positive relationship, persists over time. In summary the following could assist families in HE from a policy perspective

- Acknowledgement that the family occupies the in-between space between HE and the individual.
- Extension of SUSI grant, financial assessment to include family outgoings.
- Inclusion of the family and its mycorrhizal role in all HE Policies.
- Realisation in policy of the multiplier effect of the HE experience of the dyadic pairs.
- Funding is required to support the FGF in HE see above meso recommendations.
- Consideration of the familial perspective, the collective in legislative and policy formulation.

- Family policy where FG family members automatically are admitted to the university sibling or parent first policy. This is factored into the access policy for all HE institutions. Therefore, it capitalizes on the liquid nature of HE (Altmejd et al., 2020; Grgic & Bayer, 2015; Kaczynski, 2011; Davies, 2015). This would mean that if an adult student went to HE their parent could automatically gain entry to a course, or if a parent went, they could automatically gain entrance for their children. So, it would operate like a fast-track system on the basis that the child or parent would help in the transition to HE. Instead of the ACCESS or HEAR or DARE system but a system specifically focusing on the family.

11.6 Limitations of the study

Social class and education has been extensively researched in HE literature (Reay, 2010; Holdsworth, 2009; O'Shea, 2014; O'Shea 2019; Webb 2019; London, 1989; Lodge & Lynch 2002; Lynch, 1999; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1998 and many more). It was important to note that the term 'first generation' was employed in this research to highlight the generational and experiential nature of HE. Social class while not explicitly a research question or aim, featured and was woven into the themes of liquid education, language, educational socialisation, in the literature review, the findings and the discussion chapters. If I had focused solely on social class there could be a potential to fall into previously identified assumptions about social class, collective class consciousness and educational status values or outlook (Finnegan & Merrill, 2017). The family relationships, dynamics and experiences of FGF members were the focus for this research, it uncovered how HE permeated the family home of FGS. The research could have incorporated a broader selection criterion and included second generation and third generation learners exploring a comparison of their familial experiences and this could be perceived as a limitation to the study.

The topic of gender permeated through this research from a feminist perspective in the power that feminist researchers (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998), give to the participants. Gender did not feature as a specific theoretical focus; it was subsumed into research methods and played out in the themes of roles and relationships. There were four mothers and one father in the study as mature students in HE. It would have been preferable to recruit another parent father and daughter or son, because the voice of fathers in HE (Estes, 2011; Britton & Baxter, 2010) are relatively silent. It would have been very beneficial to recruit a single mother in HE with her son or daughter so there was a comparative family with the single father and son, however this was not possible. The next section will examine some of the methodological limitations.

In order to demonstrate my ability as a researcher to be reflexive about my methods it is necessary to describe what went wrong within the thesis and what I would do differently next time. The individual educational biographies and the self-reflective data were incorporated into the family

biographies. This individually based data could be incorporated into future research projects, which focus on the individual in HE rather than the family as the central reference point. This decision to incorporate them was due to the volume of the data generated and the focus in the overarching research question, which was the collective, the family. This does not mean that the information provided by the participants was not valuable because it was, it provided essential context.

The demands in relation to my research expectations of the families initially was too high because I underestimated the contact hours, they had in HE. The structure of their lives did not leave very much free time between work and family commitments, to engage in the self-reflective diaries. The high contact hours were because of the course and the institution, so another limitation was that this research was only undertaken in a single institution. It may be important for future research to undertake a cross institutional research sample of families or where a dyadic pair were in separate, HE institutions.

However, the five families stayed the course of the research and completed all aspects of the research apart from one family who did not want to engage in the family focus group because of extenuating family circumstances, which meant they were not in a position to participate, but they did engage in the in-depth individual interviews. The next section will focus on recommendations for future research.

11.7 Recommendations for further research

While undertaking this research there were six areas of potential future research which may prove fruitful in adding to this research topic of families and HE.

1. Large scale quantitative study to further examine the impact of intergenerational familial participation at HE. Trends of dyadic intergenerational pairs in HE on a national and international level and its impact on social class mobility.
2. Research focusing on second and third generation students and a comparison of experiences.
3. Gender dimensions of fathers and their HE role. As demonstrated in this research there was only one father student who was willing to participate in the research. Further research with fathers in HE with their children could provide insights into the gender similarities or dissimilarities of experiences.
4. Institutional side: get input from institution and lecturers on the role and influence of the family in HE or how to bring the family into HE.
5. It may have proved fruitful to recruit across another HE institution and do a comparative piece of research; this may provide the basis of future research in this area.

6. Delve further into the experiences of children of family members in HE. Ramification of HE experiences on them going forward and a longitudinal study to capture the impact of HE on them.
7. A piece of quantitative research could be undertaken to examine retention based on the family dynamics of the dyadic pair in HE concurrently. This could have an impact on recruitment and essentially if a parent and child were incentivised to attend HE together then maybe this could have a positive effect on the retention of FGS.

11.8 A Reflexive Letter to my Grandparents about my PHD Journey

I shall briefly reflect and conclude my research journey, by writing a letter to my grandparents about my Ph.D. and the key learnings acquired. They in part because they all held positive values towards education and when they were alive supported my educational pursuits with pride. It is divided up into three key sections, parallels in experience between the participants and my own HE journey and occupying the in-between space as a researcher; the practice implication for my teaching; conclude by making reference to the work of Hoggart (1957) and Seamus Heaney (1964;1987).

During the PhD process I became a mother to my two boys: they have experienced the Liquid HE effects, my family activated the mycorrhizal role to withstand our disruption due to my HE participation. Keeping a journal assisted me as a FGS in the navigation of some similarities between the experiences of the participants and my own experience. Once I recognised the similarities this informed a deeper engagement with the data and increased my understanding and empathy for their difficulties. I like O'Shea (2015) (b) have also drawn on my own "narrative compass" (Bresler, 2006, p. 28) which reflected on my own positioning as a FGS with a young family. I know I was in a privileged position as both researcher and lecturer in the Institution I acknowledged this and keeping a reflective journal as previously stated was very valuable.

I tried to avoid assumptions about shared understanding about the institution and always probed like I didn't fully understand even if I did. I also placed the participants as experts and aimed not to let my expectations as a researcher impinge on their narratives (O'Shea, 2015 b; Seidman, 1998).

I also learned that the research process itself can serve as a space for the participants, who may have previously been silent, to be heard. The focus groups gave the non-HE children a space to reflect and explain how they had been influenced by the dyadic pairs HE experience. It was emotional for many of the children. I learned from this that the research process, can provide a reflective space for the participants, it was a powerful experience to witness because they, the

children were being recognised, this ‘recognition’ meant something to them (Fleming, 2016). I aimed to sit as a researcher in the ‘in-between space’ because this guided me to be a better facilitator and listener (as discussed in Chapter 6 Methodology) as guided by the work of Fleming (2013).



My oldest boy Sonny Ray learning how to thematically code; my younger son Jesse learning how to walk, they were both fully embedded within my PhD journey.

11.9 To Conclude with Hoggart and Heaney

I found it difficult to find the words to conclude this research, so I have employed the work of Hoggart (1957) and the poetry of Seamus Heaney to facilitate this process. When I read the work of Hoggart (1957) early on in my PhD journey, I found it very powerful and most notably his chapter on the ‘scholarship boy’ which was discussed in Chapter 3. Hoggart’s (1957) quote below explains the disposition of the scholarship boy, which I believe could be Seamus Heaney himself:

Such a boy is between two worlds of school and home; and they meet at few points. Once at the grammar-school, he quickly learns to make use of a different pair of accents, perhaps even two different apparent characters and different standards of value (Hoggart, 1957)

Hoggart’s (1957) work connected with many of the research findings on language acquisition and the ‘switching’ abilities the students developed, to navigate the in-between of home and HE (Elkins and Hanke, 2018). The research findings pointed to the fact that if there is a dyadic pair in HE, then the family occupies the in-between space activating its mycorrhizal role to avoid being caught between the two worlds. The findings from the research and the work of Seamus Heaney resonated with Hoggart’s work and the in-between space of the family he wrote of. I distinctly remember this

with you, my grandparents and parents not ever wanting you to feel, as one of my participants commented, to 'feel less' due to my acquired knowledge.

In Seamus Heaney's Poem Digging he discusses this point:

Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I have no spade to follow men like them.
Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it. (Heaney, 1964)

Above, Heaney (1964) was referring to the changes in himself, he is not like them, he had changed and was armed with his own tool, the pen, because he had become educated. "Brain workers are never good with their hands" as noted by Hoggart, there are similarities in their experiences (1957, p. 301). In Heaney's poem Clearances (1987) it connects with the research findings on Liquid Education effects and how the participants 'switched' their language and had returns to the place where their 'accent belongs' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 154). The family served to ground or anchor the participants, the family was the constant, even though the students were changing. The family was the place where "alternative interpretations" of society unfolded (Hoggan et.al., 2017, p. 56). The family provided the continuity for its members while they were engaging in education, activating a mycorrhizal role to sustain the dyadic pairs. That is not to say that they did not experience because of their knowledge and language acquisition, an 'in-between' feeling, but the participants and Heaney found a way to keep everyone happy. The following quote from Clearances 4, explains Heaney's encounters with his mother, he had become educated and did not want her to 'Feel Less' on a personal level, this resonated with me as a researcher, mother, teacher and student.

...Pronouncing words 'beyond her'. Bertold Brek.
She'd manage something hampered and askew
Every time, as if she might betray
The hampered and inadequate by too
Well- adjusted a vocabulary.
With more challenge than pride, she'd tell me, 'You
Know all them things.' So I governed my tongue
In front of her, a genuinely well-
Adjusted adequate betrayal
Of what I knew better. I'd naw and aye
And decently relapse into the wrong
Grammar which kept us allied and at bay (Heaney, Clearances, 4, 1987).

Hoggart (1957) sums up the feeling of Heaney above “He feels uncertain or angry inside when he realises that, and a hundred habits of speech and manners can give him away daily” (p.301). They are both torn due their acquired knowledge and associated language just as the participants from this research. Notably for the participants in this research because there was a dyadic pair in HE concurrently they did not feel ‘caught’ or ‘in-between’ within their families because the family feels the liquid education effects and they are not on their own because the families activated their mycorrhizal role to withstand the LE HE effects. The findings from this research in-line with the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), when they explained as discussed in Chapter 5:

The parents of such an upwardly mobile individual will accept certain changes in the latter’s demeanour and attitudes as a necessary possibly even desirable, accompaniment of his new station in life (p.162)

I viewed the interview process as a ‘gift’; (Limerick et al., 1996) from the participants and this PhD is my gift to them and my own family, most notably my children and you my grandparents. Acknowledging that I myself was continually torn during this process between my studies, work and my own family. As I leave this research journey with gratitude for all who have facilitated and encouraged my journey, which was long but in the end unwavering. This was for you, my family, to prove to you that anything is possible, but you must not give up. To return to the words of Lee a participant in this research and a point he made which I fully concur with:

“I’m doin it for them (his family) too ya know” he explained.

This Ph.D. journey caused changes in me and inadvertently due to the liquidity of education, in my family.

“the space we stood around had been emptied into us to keep...and a pure change happened” (Heaney, 1987).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Chronological Examination of Pertinent Higher Education Policy

Chronological Examination of Higher Education Policy

1. 1965 Investment in Education (OECD)
2. 1966 Tuairim Report: Some of our Children
3. 1966 Introduction of Free Second Level education (Minister of Education O' Malley)
4. 1967 Report of the Commission on Higher Education
5. 1967 Report on Regional Technical Colleges
6. 1971 Higher Education Authority Act (Legislation)
7. 1980 White Paper on Educational Development
8. 1984 The Programme for Action in Education (1984-1987)
9. 1988 Education Act (Legislation)
10. 1989 University of Limerick Act
11. 1989 Dublin City University Act
12. 1991 Introduction of the Home-School Liaison Scheme
13. 1991 OECD Review of National policies for Education: Ireland
14. 1992 Regional Technical College Act (Legislation)
15. 1992 Green Paper Education for a changing world
16. 1995 White Paper Charting our education Future
17. 1995 The report of the steering group on the future of Higher education
18. 1995 Introduction of the Leaving cert Applied Programme
19. 1996 EU White Paper on Education and training
20. 1997 Irish Universities Act (Legislation)
21. 1998 Education Act
22. 1998 Green Paper on Adult Education: Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning
23. 1999 The Commission on the points system
24. 1999 Equal Status Bill
25. 1999 Bologna Declaration (Widening participation throughout Europe)
26. 1999 Qualifications (Education and training Act) (Legislation)
27. 1999 White paper on Early Childhood Education: Ready to Learn
28. 1999 The Report of the Review Committee on Post-Secondary Education and Training Places
29. 2000 EU White Paper on Lifelong Learning
30. 2000 White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life

31. 2001 The report of the Action group on access to third level education (Dept of Education and Science)
32. 2002 Introduction of the School Completion Programme
33. 2002 Education for persons with Disabilities Act (Legislation)
34. 2004 Report of the High level group on University Equality Policies HEA
35. 2004 Review of National Policies for Education. Review of Higher education in Ireland (OECD)
36. 2004-2007 The HEA Strategy Statement (HEA)
37. 2004 Action Plan: Achieving Equity of Access to third level education. 2005-2007 (HEA)
38. 2006 Institutes of Technology Act (Legislation)
39. 2006 Towards the Best Education for all: an Evaluation of Access Programmes in Higher Education in Ireland By National office for Equity of Access to HE.
40. 2007 National Development Plan 2007-2013 Transforming Ireland: A Better Quality of Life for All.
41. 2008 National Plan for equity of Access to Higher education 2008-2013 HEA
42. 2010 External Audit of Equal Access Survey June 2010 HEA
43. 2011 National Strategy for Higher education to 2030 (Hunt Report) Department of Education and Skills
44. 2011 From Transaction to Transition: Outcomes of the conference on the transition from Second to third level education in Ireland . HEA NCCA
45. 2012 Towards a future higher education landscape
46. 2012 Part-time and Flexible Higher Education in Ireland HEA
47. 2013 Supporting a better transition from second level to Higher education HEA NCCA
48. 2015 National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 HEA
49. 2018 Progress Review of the National Access Plan and Priorities to 2021 HEA
50. 2021 Study of Mature Student Participation in Higher education (Indecon for HEA)
51. 2022 National Access Plan a strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education (2022-2028) HEA

Appendix B. Questionnaire

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

Details of Research

***1. My name is Pamela Kelly and I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking a Ph.D. in Education at the Department of Education Trinity College Dublin.**

This is an anonymous survey and the information will be kept anonymous at all times. Participation in this survey is voluntary and if you wish to withdraw from this survey at any stage or if you wish to skip a question please feel free to do so. The on-line survey consists of 20 Questions and will take no longer than 5 mins to complete. The data generated will be stored securely and password protected at all times and will be used only for the purpose of academic analysis and publication.

The data collected will be used to gain an insight into the educational status of family members of third level students in Ireland.

Research ethics approval for the conduct of this research has been granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education Trinity College Dublin.

Thanking you in advance for your participation in this survey.

Should you have any further queries about the research please do not hesitate to contact me at kellyp21@tcd.ie or my supervisor Dr Andrew Loxley at loxleya@tcd.ie.

☐ I have read the above information and understand by ticking this box I am giving my informed consent to participate in this survey.
(Please tick the box to continue to the survey)

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

2. Sex

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What is your age?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65-74
- ☐ 75 or older

4. Please document your postal district, town or city in the box below. Eg.(Dublin 12, Mullingar, Cork etc.) Please ensure this is where you currently reside.

5. What is your marital Status?

- ☐ Single (Never Married)
- ☐ Married (First Marriage)
- ☐ Remarried
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

6. How many children do you have?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5+

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

7. What is your Nationality?

☐ Irish

Other (please specify)

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

8. Are you currently in paid employment?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Other (please specify)

9. What is the nature of your paid employment?

☐ Full-time

☐ Part-time

Other (please specify)

10. What is your student status?

☐ Full-time student

☐ Part-time

Other (please specify)

11. Prior to attending your current institution what is your highest level of education completed?

☐ No Formal Education

☐ Primary Education

☐ Junior Certificate

☐ Leaving Certificate

☐ Certificate

☐ Diploma

☐ Ordinary Degree

☐ Honours Degree

☐ Post Graduate Degree

Other (please specify)

12. Who was the most influential person in your decision to attend third level education?

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

13. Please document the work status for each member of your family.

	Under 5 Years of age	Student	Working	Looking for a job	Unemployed	Looking after family home	Retired	Unable to work due to illness
Parent 1 or Carer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parent 2 or Carer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partner or Husband or Wife	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 1 or Child 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 2 or Child 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 3 or Child 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 4 or Child 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 5 or Child 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 6 or Child 6	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Please indicate your parents', carers, husband or wife's occupation. Please be as specific as you can.(E.g. Receptionist in an accountancy firm).

Mother

Father

Carer

Husband wife partner

15. Are any of your family members currently in Third Level education?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Other (please specify)

16. Please identify you relationship to the family member(s) who is in Third Level Education.

☐ Mother

☐ Father

☐ Sister

☐ Brother

☐ Child

☐ Primary Carer

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

17. Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend third level education? (Immediate Family- Mother, Father, Sisters, Brothers, Children or Carer).

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comment Further

18. Are you the first person in your non-immediate family to attend third level education? (Non-Immediate - Friends, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins or Grandparents).

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comment Further

19. During term time do you live at home with your family?

☐ Yes

☐ No

20. Please document the highest level of education for each member of your family.

	No Formal Education	Still attending school	Primary Education	Junior Certificate	Leaving Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Postgraduate Degree
Parent 1 or Carer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parent 2 or Carer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partner or Husband or Wife	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 1 or Child 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 2 or Child 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 3 or Child 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 4 or Child 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 5 or Child 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sibling 6 or Child 6	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Student Survey 2015 (PK)

21. If you are the first person in your family immediate or non-immediate, to attend third level education and you have another family member in third level education at the same time. Would you be willing to participate further in this research?

☐ Yes (Please place details below)

☐ No

If you answered Yes. Please type Name, Email and telephone number below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If you have been affected by any of these question and would like to speak to someone please see below for contact details.

The Samaritans : 1850609090

Aware : 1890303302

DIT - Gabby Lynch 01-4023352

ITT- Jules Thompson- 01-4042635

ITB- Ger Quiney -01-8851129

ITB- Dee Mc Kiernan - 01-8851321

Appendix C Timeline of research Process Interview Schedule

Pilot Family	
Interview 1	November 2016
Interview 2	November 2016
Family 1	Timeline
Mothers Individual Interviews	
1 Mothers Educational Biography	Nov 2016
2 Mothers Interview	April 2017
Sons Individual Interviews	
1 Sons Educational Biography	Nov 2016
2 Sons Interview	April 2017
Family Focus Group	Sept 2017
Family 2	
Mothers Individual Interviews	
1 Mothers Educational Biography	Dec 2016
2 Mothers Interview	April 2017
Daughters Individual Interviews	
1 Daughters Educational Biography	Dec 2016
2 Daughters Interview	April 2017
Family 3	
Fathers individual Interviews	
1 Fathers Educational Biography	February 2017
2 Fathers Interview	May 2017
Sons Individual Interviews	
1 Sons Educational Biography	February 2017
2 Sons Interview	May 2017
Family Focus group	October 2017
Family 4	
Mothers Individual Interviews	
1 Mothers Educational Biography	March 2017
2 Mothers Interview	May 2017
Sons Individual Interviews	
1 Sons Educational Biography	March 2017

2 Sons Interview	May 2017
Family Focus group	February 2018
Family 5	
Mothers Individual Interviews	
1 Mothers Educational Biography	January 2018
2 Mothers Interview	February 2018
Sons Individual Interviews	
1 Sons Educational Biography	January 2018
2 Sons Interview	February 2018
Family Focus Group	March 2018

Appendix D Ethical Approval 1



Pamela Kelly <kellyp21@tcd.ie>

Ethical Approval Pamela Kelly

Fiona McKibben <mckibbef@tcd.ie>
To: Pamela Kelly <KELLYP21@tcd.ie>
Cc: Aidan Seery <SEERYA@tcd.ie>

24 October 2016 at 09:36

Approval Pamela Kelly

Dear Pamela,

The School of Education's Ethics Committee has received and considered your application for approval of your PhD research project.

It is the decision of the Committee that no additional information is needed regarding your application. Therefore, approval is granted for your research, on the condition that it is carried out as indicated on your application. Should there be a change in the design of your research project, you will need to re-apply again for approval from the School of Education's Ethics Committee.

You are required to include a copy of this letter as an appendix to your thesis.

If you have any queries regarding this decision, please contact the Chair of the School of Education's Ethics Committee and Director of Research, Dr Stephen James Minton (mintonst@tcd.ie).

We wish you all the very best with your research project.

Kind regards,

Fiona McKibben
Research Officer at the School of Education
on behalf of Professor Stephen James Minton
Director of Research

3088 School of Education Arts Building
[Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin](#)
Dublin 2, Ireland.
Tel | + 353 1 8963583

Ethical Approval 2



Pamela Kelly <kellyp21@tcd.ie>

Pamela Kelly Ph.D student (amendment to application for ethical approval) 2 August 2017

Phdrsrch <PHDRSRCH@tcd.ie>
To: Pamela Kelly <KELLYP21@tcd.ie>
Cc: Andrew Loxley <LOXLEYA@tcd.ie>

2 August 2017 at 14:21

Approval Pamela Kelly Ph.D student

2 August 2017

Dear Pamela,

The School of Education's Ethics Committee has received and considered your request to amend your application for approval of your Ph.D. research project.

It is the decision of the Committee that no additional information is needed regarding your application. Therefore, approval is granted for your research on the condition that it is carried out as indicated on your application. Should there be a change in the design of your research project, you will need to re-apply again for approval from the School of Education's Ethics Committee.

You are required to include a copy of this letter as an appendix to your thesis.

If you have any queries regarding this decision, please contact the Chair of the School of Education's Ethics Committee and Director of Research, Dr Ann Devitt (devittan@tcd.ie).

We wish you all the very best with your research project.

Kind regards,

Fiona McKibben

Research Officer at the School of Education

on behalf of Professor Ann Devitt

Director of Research

3088 School of Education Arts Building

[Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin](#)

Dublin 2, Ireland.

Tel | + 353 1 8963583

Appendix E: Participant consent and research information



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Participant Consent and Information Form 2016-2017

Researcher: Mrs. Pamela Kelly

Study Title: Intergenerational participation in Higher Education: A case study exploring the experience of first generation families, participating in intergenerational learning.

My name is Pamela Kelly and I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking a Ph.D. in Education in the School of Education Trinity College Dublin. My supervisors are Dr. Andrew Loxley and Dr Aidan Seery. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may at any stage withdraw from all or any part of the research process.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to gain an insight into the everyday experiences of students who are participating in higher education for the first time and the affect this may have on family life. In particular my focus is on those families where participation is intergenerational.

More specifically I am interested in gaining an insight into:

- the learning that occurs
 - within the university and the home
 - between the students from different generations and also
 - among the family members who are not students.
- To examine family roles and student roles.
- To document and capture the inter/intragenerational learning within families.

You have volunteered to participate in this research as you and another family member are currently participating in third level education concurrently.

Your involvement in the study is comprised of six parts which will take place throughout the academic year 2016-2017. Please be assured that all parts of the research process will be carried out in a professional, sensitive, non-stressful manner and that you are free to withdraw at any time.

Map of research process- Participants role

The chronology of the research process

- In _____ participants will be interviewed briefly to discuss their educational biography; at this stage the participant will be asked to document their educational and family educational biographies.
- In _____ the participant will be interviewed.
- In _____ the participants and their family will be invited to a family focus group held in Trinity College Dublin.

Part 1 – Interview and Educational Biography

I will distribute the questions to the participant by email prior to the interview.

I will if you consent to, will document the educational biography of your family members and detail your own educational experience to date; your experience of being in education from pre-school, primary school, secondary school, other educational endeavours and third level education; motivation to learn, influences, learning, curriculum, assessments, exams and extra-curricular endeavours outside of school.

This information provided will form a themed section of the interview to follow and the educational biographies will be discussed in detail, in the family focus groups as relevant.

Part 2 - Individual in-depth interviews

Questions will be emailed to the participant prior to the interview.

Individual in-depth student interviews will be carried out.

This will involve a one to one interview based around the themes identified by the researcher and also by the information and themes that are contained in the memory book entries of the participants. The interviews will be audio recorded and the conversations will be transcribed post interview. The transcripts will be made available to the participants.

Part 3 Family Focus group

Family Focus groups will be carried out with all family members, where possible.

It is very important that all family members understand the purpose of the family focus group is to add the family dimension into the research process. To capture all family members perspectives on higher education from a micro perspective on a daily basis for both the students within the family and the family members who are not studying. To access the impact on the family of both family members attending third level education. The family focus groups will be audio recorded and the conversations will be transcribed post interview. The transcripts will be made available to the participants.

Research Dissemination

The information obtained during the research process will form the basis of my PhD research. It may be disseminated in the following formats: 1) published academic journals and books, 2) conference presentations, and 3) the photographs obtained may be used in a photographic exhibition but only when additional consent is given by participants to use them.

At all times when findings arising from the data generated is published, it will be anonymous and the participants will be non-identifiable and non-traceable. This will be achieved by giving each of the participants a pseudonym which also includes the family name. There will be a feedback session with the participants to discuss the findings of the research process.

Privacy of participants – Storage of data and destruction

The information obtained from the participants will be kept on a personal laptop and the files which contain the participants details will be password protected at all times. All hard copies of the memory books will be scanned and given back to the participants. All photographs will be sent by email and saved in a password protected file. All audio recordings will be transcribed and the discs will be locked in a cabinet. After all components of the research process have been transcribed the originals will be destroyed post PhD.

Should you have any further queries about the research please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors at any stage.

Researcher contact details

Pamela Kelly

Kellyp21@tcd.ie or pamela.kelly@itb.ie

Work Direct line Number -01-8851513

Supervisors contact details

Andrew Loxley loxleya@tcd.ie

Aidan Seery seerya@tcd.ie

Participant Consent Form

Participation in this survey is voluntary and if you wish to withdraw from this research at any stage please feel free to do so. The information generated will be stored securely and password protected at all times and will be used only for the purpose of academic analysis and publication.

I have read the research information sheet above and I understand what is involved in the research process.

Please sign below if you are giving your informed consent to participate in the research.

Participant Signature

Researcher Signature

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this research.

Appendix F: Individual Educational Biography Questions Guide

Questions for First Interview Educational Biography

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Pseudonym:

Verbal and Written consent Y/N

Sex:

Age:

Highest education achieved:

Parental occupation:

No of people in Family/ Highest education achieved

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Your occupation main source of income?

How did you pay for your fees?

How are you finding being at higher education?

How do you find learning?

What course are you on?

What made you choose this course?

What do you hope to do when you have completed your degree?

How many people are in your family?

Have you ever been in higher education before?

Has anyone in your family been in higher education before?

What is the highest educational qualifications of each of your family members?

What was your main motivation to attend higher education?

Who was your main influence to attend higher education?

What were your first experiences of education in the home? Any memories or examples or objects?

What was your experience of primary school? Could you talk to me about that? Social, educational relationships positive experiences negative experiences?

What were the main things you learned in primary school? Curriculum or hidden curriculum explain to participants/

Who do you remember and why, family friends, teacher etc?

What was your experience of secondary school? Could you talk to me about that

What were the main things you learned in secondary school? Curriculum Social, educational relationships positive experiences negative experiences?

Who do you remember and why, Family friends, teacher.

Who has been the most influential person or persons in your educational journey to date?

Was pursuing an education encouraged or not in your community?

Was pursuing an education encouraged or not in your family?

Do all members of your immediate family have the same beliefs/values about education?

Do all members of your extended family have the same beliefs/ values about education?

Would you like to discuss anything significant or not about your history or relationship with education?

END

Appendix G: Individual Interview – Questions

Each family's individual interviews were in part shaped by their educational biographies and in the main the key areas for focus in the interviews were directed by the participants but they centered around questions and follow up questions on:

1. Relationships;
2. Roles;
3. Educational socialisation process;
4. HE in the family home;
5. HE experience; Language and knowledge from HE.
6. Self and identity

This was a very refined balancing act between the questions I would like them to answer and also letting them talk to me about what their experiences of HE and the family were like for them. While I entered each interview with a rough interview guide of questions these were shaped and moulded to fit the interviewee's.

Having gone through your educational biography interview transcriptions I would like to follow up on a few areas just to clarify that I understood you correctly. (This was done for each participant)

What role did your family play in your experience of education?

What role did your parents play in your education? Could you talk me through this and give some examples if you have them?

Has your child helped in your transition into higher education?

How have you experienced the transition what was the most difficult thing about it?

You now know more information than before how has this changed you? Or has it not?

How do people perceive you now? Same or different could you talk me through this?

How has your parent helped you in your transition to higher education?

Who are you as a person, what kind of person are you, How would you describe yourself?

How did you arrive at this view of yourself?

What interactions in your life have shaped the person you are today?

Are you dependant on other family members and extended family?

Are you independent of your family members and extended family

Who was the main influence in you going to HE?

What is the experience of other family members who are not engaging in third level education do you think, how have they been impacted by Higher education in the home?

How are roles of student and family member negotiated within the family home and the learning environment in third level?

How are peer and extended family members effected by your third level experience?

How has the family group changed?

What are the societal roles or societal expectations for husbands, wives, sons daughters?

What are the roles of mother student, Daughter student?

How did the family arrive at these roles?

How were they constructed?

Which family members are most important?

How do individuals add uniqueness to their family roles

When you were a child did your parents read to you?

What is your first memory of books?

Was their books in your house growing up?

What was the overall view about education in your family when you were growing up?

What was your experience of Primary school?

Do you remember the first thing you learnt?

Did you read to your children when they were younger

At what age did you begin reading to your children/child?

Did you do their homework with them?

Did you attend parent teacher meetings?

What was your experience of your child primary school education?

What was your experience of your child's secondary school education

What was your experience of your child's entry into higher education?

How do children socialise parents into higher education?

What is the connection between socialisation and the concept of self?

How did the process of education influence your sense of self?

What ways do family members create and negotiate family roles and self identity?

Transition into adulthood outside the home within the home child?

Is your identity as a student's linked to your identity as a child?

Is your identity as an adult different when you are in college?

Have you created two identities or are they the same?

How has your relationship with your child/parent since HE?

Have your roles changed?

Has the power differential changed?

Who has power now? Since the return to education?

Do you have autonomy and independence?

How is this maintained?

What does the family home mean to you?

Do you study at home or in college? Why?

Do you think that you bring HE home with you or do you leave it there?

How do you think your family has dealt with your new language and knowledge?

How do you think higher education has had an impact on your relationships and could you talk me through that?

How has your relationship with other family members changed since beginning in Higher education?

Do you have support, do you need support?

How have they reacted?

What were your expectations about higher education before you started?

What are your expectations now?

What are the reasons they have changed?

How did you find making the transition to higher education?

What was the easiest part?

What have you found the most difficult?

Have you ever doubted your abilities at any point?

Do you think you will succeed?

What are the factors which will have an impact on your success?

What was your confidence like when you began the course?

What is your confidence like now at this point? Has it changed what effected this change and how did you know it had grown or not?

Shared set or not of goals- values beliefs, norms around education (pull out of life histories)

How does the family arrive at a shared sense of education? Has it changed? or does it have a shared sense of education?

How have your friends reacted to you in Higher education?

Have you experienced any encounters which were positive in relation to higher education?

Have you experienced any negative comments in relation to you attending higher education?

First generation question- the impact of being first generation and what does this mean to you? How does this play out in the home and in higher education?

Social class has had any impact on your journey to and in higher education? How have you experienced your social class?

Has your gender shaped this experience of attending Higher education?in what way could you give me some examples?

Has your family experienced HE? Due to your experience of HE?

Appendix H: Family Focus Group Questions Topics to Discuss

Topic guide and Questions

The questions were not asked in this order it varied from family to family. It also depended on what the family wanted to focus on as being meaningful to them and the

Go around the table and ask each **non-HE family member** also if applies apply to HE participants

Current educational status.

Their views likes dislikes about education favourite subjects

Favourite teachers

Family values around education positive or negative how do you experience this?

Books and their role in the home

Family values

Feelings about the mothers return to education

Feelings about the sibling attending HE

Have things changed in the family or are they the same?

Has communication in the family changed and how?

Relationships are they the same or have they changed since the dyadic pair in HE?

Bring in comments from individual interviews specific to each family- Invisible visible – conflict – language- roles Dinners

How do they experience HE in the home?

How has the language in the home changed?

What have you learned from the HE participants?

Try to explore and identify the families values

How do conversations in the home who has power or is it equal has this remained the same or changed?

Who does what in the home and has this changed?

Space for the non-HE participants to express how the dyadic pair in HE has had an impact on them and their lives.

Has the non-HE participants expectations and perceptions of HE changed since the dyadic pair engaged in HE?

Support or not from non-HE members for HE participants?

How has the family home changed?

How has the family as a group changed?

Any parental guilt from either parent discuss

How do you see the HE participants now ask the non- HE participants if they see them differently because of their HE experiences?

Has there been any conflict in the home since the dyadic pair went to HE?

Familial sacrifices

How have anyone's friends reacted to either family member in HE Peer group, same different....

How have the extended family reacted to the HE participation of the dyad.

Familial regrets?

How does the family keep going even though it gets tough?

Has the family met any resistance from anyone in relation to HE and the dyadic pair?

Has the family received any support or encouragement from extended family members community etc?

Have relationships with the extended family changed due to HE participation?

In relation to the dyadic pair what have they learned from each other?

Main influences in education ask each family member?

Decision to attend HE talk me through that

Would anyone like to raise or speak about anything that they would like to discuss in relation to HE and the home?

Space for the children to speak to the parents about their perspective of the parents in higher education. If not organically raised return at the end.

How has your family group managed the transition to higher education?

Has the family as a group changed during this process?

What adaptations have people had to make?

Financial, emotional, Work roles etc

What do you think are the roles or societal expectations of wife, husband, son, daughter?

How were these roles formed within your family?

How has being in higher education effected these roles?

How do you define your role within the family? (What do you do that makes you play out the role of daughter?)

How does your role within your family influence your behaviour?

Has your role within the family changed since you began in higher education?

What is the emotional climate in the home?

What objects within your home hold significance to your family? (photographs, religious items child's drawings books etc)

Kinds of objects and how they are displayed within the home? Medals trophies etc

When do emotions run high in the family?

When are things pretty stable in relation to emotions within the family?

Role making (role of student parent student daughter....)

Role Stress

Norms around roles who does what? domestic financial shopping making tea etc?

How do students feel perceive and experience discuss in front of other family members?

Government has done to get you to go to education Policy Link

Appendix I- 15 point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) 15 point Checklist of Criteria for Good thematic Analysis

Table 2 A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
Analysis	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
Overall	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 96)

Thank you for reading my thesis.