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**Pupil and Teacher Unfolding
Identities in a Newly-Amalgamated Secondary School**

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Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	VI
ABSTRACT.....	VII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VIII
DEDICATION.....	IX
LIST OF TABLES.....	X
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XI
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.3 GUIDING THEMES.....	3
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.5 AMALGAMATIONS IN IRELAND.....	5
1.5.1 PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.....	6
1.5.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AMALGAMATION.....	7
1.5.3 LOCAL CONTEXT.....	8
1.5.4 HISTORICAL CONTEXT BAYVIEW.....	10
1.6 OUR SCHOOL – COLÁISTE FIONN.....	12
1.6.1 SCHOOL AWARDS NIGHT.....	13
1.7 SELF AS CONTEXT - MY OWN STORY OF LEARNING.....	14
1.8 JUSTIFICATION FOR RESEARCH & ROLE OF RESEARCHER.....	15
1.9 THESIS OVERVIEW.....	16
1.10 CONCLUSION.....	12
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW:	
IDENTITY UNFOLDS IN THE MOMENT-TO- MOMENT.....	20
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	20
2.2 DEFINITION OF IDENTITY.....	21
2.3 MIND-A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PHENOMENON.....	23
2.4 IDENTITY PERFORMED AND NEGOTIATED.....	26
2.5 INTERACTIONAL POSITIONAL IDENTITIES.....	30
2.6 DEVELOPING A SPACE FOR AUTHORIZING.....	35
2.7 IDENTITY UNFOLDS THROUGH SOCIAL PARTICIPATION.....	37

2.7.1 DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY THROUGH PARTICIPATION.....	44
2.8 IDENTITY UNFOLDS IN THE EVERYDAY.....	50
2.9 THE PLACE OF SPORT IN EDUCATION.....	61
2.10 EMPIRICAL STUDIES – “To be part of the story”.....	67
2.11 CONCLUSION.....	83
CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW:	
IDENTITY NEGOTIATED THROUGH NARRATIVE.....	85
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	87
3.2 IDENTITY AS CONTEXTUAL.....	88
3.2.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT.....	89
3.2.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	90
3.3 IDENTITY UNFOLDS THROUGH NARRATIVE.....	92
3.3.3 HUMAN WORMERY – HISTORIES OF PARTICIPATION.....	97
3.4 SOCIALLY PRODUCED IDENTITY.....	97
3.5 IDENTITY, NARRATIVE AND MEMORY SOCIALLY ENTWINE.....	99
3.5.1 MEMORY AS A FORM OF SOCIAL NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY...	101
3.5.2 REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING THE GOOD OLD DAYS.....	104
3.6 EVERYDAY PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL INTERACTION.....	105
3.7 CONCLUSION.....	107
CHAPTER 4 LITERATURE REVIEW:	
IDENTITY NEGOTIATED IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.....	110
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	110
4.2 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – SOCIAL NETWORKING.....	111
4.2.1 SOCIAL HUMMING IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.....	113
4.3 SOCIO-CULTURAL WEAVING.....	115
4.4 MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS.....	117
4.5 JOINT ENTERPRISE.....	118
4.6 LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION.....	122
4.6.1 ABSORBED AND BEING ABSORBED.....	124
4.7 CHANGING FORMS OF PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY.....	124
4.7.1 A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE – A FIELD OF POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES.....	125
4.7.2 BOUNDARIES AND PERIPHERIES – THE GATEWAYS TO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.....	127
4.8 CRITIQUE OF WENGER.....	131
4.9 CONCLUSION.....	133
CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	135
5.2 GUIDING QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS.....	135
5.3 CASE STUDY.....	136

5.3.1 NARRATIVE APPROACH TO CASE STUDY.....	138
5.4 SAMPLE.....	140
5.4.1 PURPOSEFUL AND THEORITICAL SAMPLING.....	140
5.5 MEASURES.....	142
5.5.1 CONSTRUCTIVIST MEASURES.....	142
5.5.2 ETHICAL MEASURES.....	143
5.5.3 STRATEGIES FOR ETHICAL USE.....	146
5.5.4 REFLEXIVITY IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH.....	148
5.6 PILOT TESTING.....	149
5.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES.....	150
5.7.1 ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION.....	150
5.7.2 INTERVIEWING – INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP.....	152
5.7.3 DIARY USE.....	154
5.7.4 SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA.....	155
5.7.5 VISUAL RESEARCH METHOLOGIES.....	156
5.7.6 DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE.....	159
5.8 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES.....	160
5.8.1 THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	160
5.8.2 OPEN CODING.....	161
5.8.3 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.....	161
5.9 PARTICIPANT VOICE.....	162
5.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	163
5.10.1 POWER DYNAMICS.....	164
5.11 TIMELINES.....	166
5.12 CONCLUSION.....	167
CHAPTER 6 HOW SPORT IS USED TO NEGOTIATE IDENTITIES IN NEW SPACES.....	168
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	168
6.2 CRAFTING AN IDENTITY IN THE MOMENT-TO - MOMENT.....	171
6.2.1 GROWING THROUGH ACTIVITY.....	176
6.2.2 IDENTITY FORMATION – KATIE THE AGENT.....	178
6.2.3 PRACTICES INVESTED IN.....	182
6.2.4 CHOOSING AN IDENTITY TO GROW BY.....	185
6.2.5 SPORT A SALIENT IDENTITY TO GROW BY.....	186
6.2.6 FIGURED WORLDS GATHER KATIE UP.....	192
6.2.7 FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE SCHOOL.....	195
6.3 ALICE AND SPORT.....	201
6.3.1 FIGURED WORLDS: A SPACE FOR ALICE TO BELONG.....	203
6.3.2 MEDIATIONAL TOOLS.....	205
6.3.3 ETCHING OUT A LIV-ABLE IDENTITY.....	205

6.4 A RICH TAPESTRY OF SPORTIG LIFE ON THE CORRIDOR.....	207
6.4.1 A FIGURED WORLD PLAYED OUT.....	208
6.4.2 CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATION IN PE.....	211
6.5 CONCLUSION.....	218
CHAPTER 7 HW IDENTITIES ARE MADE THROUGH NARRATIVE.....	220
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	220
7.2 HOW VISUAL IDENTITY EVOLVES IN AN AMALGAMATED SCHOOL.....	223
7.2.1 HOW THE WORK OF SUBJECT DEPARTMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO IDENTITY BUILDING.....	230
7.2.2 HOW ARTWORK HELPS FIRST YEARS GAIN AN IDENTITY.....	234
7.2.3 HOW THE COLLECTIVE PRACTICES OF AN ART CLASS ARE IDENTITY FORMING.....	239
7.3 HOW STAFF PARTICIPATION IN THURSDAY CLUB IS IDENTITY TRANSFORMING.....	241
7.3.1 CLUSTERS OF STORIES – TOLD AND UNTOLD.....	247
7.3.2 HOW A STAFF EVENT IMPACTS ON THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY.....	248
7.3.3 HOW THE IDENTITY IS MADE THROUGH THE NARRATIVE IN THE STAFFROOM.....	251
7.4 HOW IDENTITY INVOLVES THE CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION MEANING THROUGH STORIES OVER TIME.....	257
7.4.1 REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING.....	261
7.5 CONCLUSION.....	263
CHAPTER 8 HOW IDENTITY IS NEGOTIATED IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.....	269
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	270
8.2 HOW SOCIAL MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT MAKES AND UNMAKES STAFF....	272
8.2.1 THE BUMPS, BRIDES AND BYE BYE’S PARTY.....	273
8.2.2 A UNIQUE MEDLEY OF PEOPLE.....	276
8.3 HOW STAFF ENGAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC JOINT ENTERPRISE IMPACTS ON IDENTITY BUILDING.....	279
8.4 HOW ONE STAFF MEMBER GAINED A POSITIONAL IDENTITY.....	282
8.4.1 SHARED REPERTOIRE.....	286
8.5 HOW NEWCOMERS GROW THEIR IDENTITIES THROUGH MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT WITH OLD-TIMERS.....	288
8.5.1 LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION.....	291
8.5.2 ABSORBING AND BEING ABSORBED.....	294
8.5.3 NEW PRACTICES ACQUIRED, SHARED AND EXTENDED.....	295
8.5.4 TRAJECTORIES - A CONSTANT BECOMING.....	296
8.5.5 GENERATIONAL ENCOUNTERS.....	297
8.6 HOW NEWCOMERS ARE TRANSFORMED BY PARTICIPATING IN	

MUTUALLY CONSTITUTIVE PRACTICES.....	298
8.7 NEWLY FORMED COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE IN THE SCHOOL.....	301
8.7.1 A DAY IN THE LIFE OF FIRST YEARS – THE SCHOOL TOUR.....	307
8.7.2 HOW PARTICIPATION IN THE PARENT ASSOCIATION IS IDENTITY TRANSFORMING.....	312
8.7.3 A NEXUS OF MULTI – MEMBERSHIP UNFOLDS.....	314
8.8 ACADEMIC NARRATIVE AROUND TESTS.....	316
8.9 CONCLUSION.....	324
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	327
9.1 INTRODUCTION.....	327
9.2 CRITICAL DISCUSSION AND KEY IDEAS OF THIS STUDY.....	327
9.2.1 ITS ALL ABOUT THE “NON-LOCAL” VIEW OF THE MIND.....	328
9.3 RESEARCH DESIGN “A LENS INTO CAPTURING THE MOMENT – TO – MOMENT”.....	329
9.4 GUIDING THEMES.....	333
9.4.1 ROGOFF’S DEVELOPMENT THEORY UNFOLDS.....	340
9.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	340
9.6 CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF AMALGAMATION.....	341
9.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY MAKERS	343
9.7 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF SOCIO-CULTURAL THEORY.....	345
9.8 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	346
9.9 CONCLUSION.....	347
9.10 A BRIEF REFLECTION.....	350
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	351
APPENDICES.....	361
APPENDIX 1: CONCEPTUAL FILTERATION FUNNEL.....	361
APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPATION.....	362
APPENDIX 3: REIFICATION.....	363
APPENDIX 4: THE DUALITY OF PARTICIPATION & REIFICATION.....	364
APPENDIX 5: ROGOFF’S THEORY.....	365
APPENDIX 6: RODGERS & SCOTT IDENTITY ASSUMPTIONS.....	366
APPENDIX 7: LAYERS OF PARTICIPATION.....	367
APPENDIX 8: THE STORIED NATURE OF IDENTITY.....	368
APPENDIX 9: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE IN COLÁISTE FIONN.....	369
APPENDIX 10: MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT.....	370
APPENDIX 11: JOINT ENTERPRISE.....	371
APPENDIX 12: SHARED REPERTOIRE.....	372
APPENDIX 13: LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION.....	373
APPENDIX 14: SOCIAL RESEARCH AND ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER.....	374
APPENDIX 15: INFORMED CONSENT.....	375

APPENDIX 16: STAFF FOCUS GROUP & INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	378
APPENDIX 17: PILOT FINDINGS.....	381
APPENDIX 18: PARENT ASSOCIATION COLÁISTE FIONN.....	387

Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Signed_____

Imelda Mulhall

Date_____

Abstract

This research study stemmed from the amalgamation of two secondary schools in the town of Bayview. This brought mammoth change, as the lived school landscape transformed for both teacher and pupil. My research attempts to capture the unfolding identities of teacher and pupil in this space.

I explored three guiding themes as a means of unearthing the unfolding identities of both teacher and pupil. I looked at how sport is used as a tool to negotiate identities in new spaces. Secondly, I examined how identities are negotiated through narrative and finally I looked at how identities are negotiated in communities of practice.

I believe in the constructivist view that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research site. Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify qualitative research methods as the preferred methods for researchers working in the constructivist paradigm. I employed a case study approach, thematic analysis and the methods of semi-structured interviewing, focus groups and diary analysis as the main research methods.

The main findings of this study are that sport is a salient identity that both teacher and pupil grow by. The practices that we find meaning in are the practices that we invest our identities in. Identity is formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation. Identity is formed in relationship with others. Mind is truly social and it is through participation in the situated practices of communities of practice that identities flourish.

This research was not designed to advance Socio-Cultural Theory but definitely drew on this theory in a novel way to expose and explicate matters of identity and community building in a secondary school setting. Socio-Cultural Theory underpinned the framework for this study and I feel that the findings unveil the truly social nature of the mind in its cultural settings.

The sociocultural understanding of self and mind places the individual within a community, defining consciousness as relational, shared, emergent, mediated and distributed by the world in which we live and those we share it with. In this study, teacher and pupil identities were acquired through the myriad of activities and social interactions which took place in the different communities of practice they participated in. It is through participation in communities of practice that identities flourished and people were made and unmade in the moment-to-moment exchanges. This research has shown that the ordinary everyday ebbs and flows of life do make a difference to the kinds of people that individuals are allowed to become.

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Thank you to all the participants in the study: school management, the teachers, pupils and the parents from the parent's association and the entire school community in Coláiste Fionn. Thank you all so much for willingly participating in this research on your school, without you I could not produce this study. Thanks to my colleagues in the Business Studies Department for their support.

I would like to thank Dr. Sharon Kingston for her work in proofreading this work, Dr. Kevin Healy for his support. I would also like to thank Darragh and Tiernan O'Connor who are pupils of Coláiste Fionn for the excellent illustrations which support this study.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their help and support through this long journey: My mother Mary and my husband Greg for minding my children, my sons Luke, Greg, John and Joe for their patience.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my son Fionn. Fionn was only a year old when I began the PhD in 2011. For the next three years Fionn witnessed me doing many assignments and would say, “mommy on the puter”. I was just about to write up this study in 2014 when Fionn died tragically.

Your smile, your love and determination are my guide.

Fionn Mulhall

(2010-2014)



List of Tables

Table 1A: Bayview Post-Primary Enrolment.....	9
Table 2A: Theoretical framework.....	21
Table 2B: Empirical Studies.....	67
Table 5A: Data Collection Timeline.....	159
Table 5B: Research Timeline.....	166
Table 6A: Structure of Sport Findings Chapter.....	169
Table 6B: First Year Induction Timetable	172
Table 6C: Health Promoting School Awareness Week.....	193
Table 6D: Excerpt from focus group with second year boys.....	207
Table 6F: Key findings of how identity is negotiated through sport.....	218
Table 7A: Adaptation of Rodger's and Scott's assumptions of identity.....	222
Table 7B: Key findings of how identity is negotiated through narrative.....	263
Table 8A: Structure of how identity is negotiated in communities of Practice	269
Table 8B: Key findings of how identity is negotiated in communities of Practice.....	324

List of diagrams and figures

Figure 1A: Bayview Post-Primary Enrolment.....	10
Figure 2A: Chestnut Tree.....	19
Figure 3A: Memory Lane.....	86
Figure 3B: Down Memory Lane.....	103
Figure 6A: The Pitch.....	195
Figure 6B: Poster summarising Katie's first year in Coláiste Fionn.....	198
Figure 6C Unfolding life of a First -Year.....	211
Figure 7A: Artefact 1 – School Crest.....	224
Figure 7B: Artefact 2 – Christ in Glory.....	225
Figure 7C: Artefact 3 – A selection of pictures reflecting life in the old School worlds.....	227
Figure 7D: Geography Model of a Volcano.....	231
Figure 7E: Moll's collage of a Fox.....	234
Figure 7F: Cassy's Collage.....	237
Figure 7G: Second years Bird Collage.....	201
Figure 7H: Ticket for the Grease Sing -A-Long.....	249
Figure 7 I: Poster for Staff Fancy Dress.....	255
Figure 8A: Poster promoting “grown-ups 2” for first years.....	266
Figure 8B: First year Marita's depiction of her early days in Coláiste Fionn...	267
Figure 8C: First year tour to West Cork Secret.....	268
Figure 8D: Staffroom Cake Party.....	276
Figure 8E: Mixed Media Sculptures displayed on main stairway.....	278
Figure 8F: Tess portrays what life is like as a first year.....	303

Chapter 1: Introduction

We are both made and unmade by each other (Lawler, 2008, p.149).

1.1 Introduction

The opening chapter sets the scene for this research on the unfolding identities of both teacher and pupil in a newly amalgamated secondary school setting. Firstly, I outline the rationale for this research and the contextual forces that bear on my study. I briefly set forth the guiding questions that I endeavour to seek answers to in this terrain. I trace my own journey as a learner and as a practicing second level teacher in Coláiste Fionn, the primary site of study. I set out the view of the world that I espouse and how this will have a direct effect on the methodological track that I will take in order to give voice to the unfolding identities of teachers and pupils in the lived world of Coláiste Fionn.

1.2 Background to the study

My research interest stems from the amalgamation of the only two Secondary Schools in the town of Bayview. Both schools were Co-Educational and the formal amalgamation took place in the month of October, when the newly amalgamated school Coláiste Fionn opened its doors. This amalgamation brought a tidal wave of change for the teachers and pupils immersed in this process. Both parties experienced mammoth changes in practices, meaning and identity. The lived school landscape transformed and my research endeavours to capture the voiced experience of both the teachers and the pupils in this setting.

In the climate of amalgamation both the staff and students involved experienced personal and professional trauma at the pre, during and post amalgamation stages. In the pre-amalgamation phase teachers were concerned about the nature of their work practices, if indeed they would be teaching the same subjects and classes. I, along with several colleagues had part-time contracts and we were due to get Contracts of Indefinite Duration. We feared whether these would be granted. One staff group would be changing employer from the Department of Education and Science to the County Vocational Educational Committee. They would also face a change of leadership from their former principal to the appointed principal of the new school, who was formerly a principal of one of the amalgamating schools. Many students were also gripped by fear. In particular examination classes were apprehensive concerning the move during this vital exam year, particularly in regard to whether they would be in the same class and continue with the same teachers. Other students feared for their subject choice and for the general changes associated with a move from one school to another in their student lives.

The new school opened in August, but operated from two separate campuses, the examination students remained on one site, whilst the remainder of the school population stayed on the other school site. This continued until October. Staff found themselves commuting between the two schools at frantic paces and they had to embrace this as part of their normal work practice. They often had no time to have a cup of tea, not to mind a chat with a colleague. They had to pack their resources and textbooks into boxes and get them assembled for decanting. These designated boxes were of a certain size and one could only access a certain amount of them. There was no doubt but these vessels were a source of heightened stress. Some of the students had to relocate to a school that they had previously chosen not to enrol in and some found this particularly upsetting. When we finally moved it

was awesome, a huge space, a gigantic stairway leading to the top of the building. Both Students and Staff were instructed to move on the left and students were to occupy certain areas in the building. There was now a canteen and regulations associated with ordering and collecting food. All students and staff had been given a guided tour before moving in but it was a little difficult to navigate through this magnificent building. When teachers finally found their class-rooms they discovered that amidst all the technology they did not have a duster for their whiteboard and would have to report this on a designated form to Sodexo the school management company.

I was part of this change. I felt that fear. I filled my allocated boxes. I decanted and I have survived. It is against this experience that I have decided to research this topic of capturing the voiced experiences of my colleagues and pupils, in this space for my doctoral research topic.

1.3 Guiding Questions

As a researcher fundamentally concerned with how individuals “dealt with” the move to a newly amalgamated school, a set of guiding questions supported by sub-questions was devised for each of the three main themes explored in the study. These questions were thought to provide the most productive means of generating data in order to generate a theory.

The first of the guiding themes related to sport.

Sport Identity:

1. How sport is used as a tool to negotiate identities in new spaces

Sub-questions

- **How a newcomer first year pupil Katie's identity is negotiated through sport?**
- **How a newcomer teacher Alice's identity is negotiated through sport?**
- **How other pupils negotiate their identities through sport?**

The second guiding theme related to narrative and its role in the construction of identity.

Narrative Identity:

2. How identities are made through narrative.

Sub-questions

- **How visual identity evolves in a newly amalgamated school?**
- **How identity is formed in relationship with others?**
- **How identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time?**

Finally, I explored the hub of social relations by examining how identity is negotiated in Communities of Practice.

Communities of Practice:

3. How identity is negotiated in communities of practice.

Sub-questions

- **How staff engagement in communities of practice impacts on identity building?**
- **How newcomers grow their identities through mutual engagement with old-timers?**
- **How first years create their own shared history of engagement in communities of practice?**

In approaching my research in the above manner, I hope to give a true voice to the lived experience of the teachers and pupils in this amalgamated school setting.

1.4 Significance of the study

Firstly, this research is personally very significant to me. I was a teacher teaching in one of the pre-amalgamated schools. I had to navigate through the change, embracing it and playing a role on the task group that organised the school crest, name of the school and its uniform. I belong to Coláiste Fionn and its growth and development as a new second level school. My professional learning journey is very much entwined with this new school. The establishment of Coláiste Fionn marked a new era in the history of education in the town of Bayview. The study captures this everyday unfolding of teacher and pupil identity in a new school.

This research is also significant as it is of interest to all the stakeholders involved in Coláiste Fionn, from parents, the Board of Management, to the trustees and County Vocational Educational Committee. It speaks to a wider audience in the form of the Department of Education, as Coláiste Fionn is lauded as a model for partnership and community initiative. My research tells the human story behind the policy and the process. It reveals the stories of substance in preference to semblance in this newly amalgamated school setting (Lawler, 2008, p. 102).

1.5 Amalgamations in Ireland

The documentation on either the philosophy or process of amalgamation in Ireland is scant. This maybe because amalgamations are often decided on a local level as seen in Bayview or on a case-by-case basis. The Commission on School Accommodation published some

information regarding same. The over-riding philosophy of the Commission on School Accommodation viewed amalgamations as all about improvement and not decline (CSA, 2001). The Department's policy in relation to post-primary education is to provide "schools of sufficient size to enable a curricular choice to all students" (Comptroller and Auditor General, 1996, p.10). This represents a change in policy. In the early 1960's The Commission on School Accommodation states that an enrolment of 150 was accepted to be the ideal size for a post-primary school. By 1966 when the first comprehensive school was opened, the ideal size for such schools was 460, no doubt enrolment in some far short of the average (CSA, 2001, p.21). The concern is that when two or more school operate within a town, neither may have sufficient enrolment to provide "an enhanced educational environment for the students with an efficient supply of resources" (CSA, 2001, p.25). When an amalgamation occurs', the outcome involves facilities for specialist areas of the curriculum and student access to a broader range of teacher skills. These benefits involve two key areas that are used by the Department and others to promote amalgamation: buildings and staffing.

1.5.1 Public Private Partnerships

One of the most significant developments in the area of school accommodation is the Public/Private Partnership. The Commission on School Accommodation also refers to the fact that partnership "may offer opportunities to support the amalgamation process in the future" (2001, p.29). A private consortium builds the building and furnishes it for the purpose intended. In the case of schools, the Department of Education and Science or the local Vocational Education Committee, leases the complex for a fixed period. During that period, repair, maintenance and management of the buildings is the responsibility of the consortium. A further feature is that the consortium can also lease parts of the building to

other parties outside school hours. The sports hall in the school could be leased to local sports clubs during the evenings and the classrooms for night and weekend classes. Hence the PPP model represents a way of obtaining up-to-date facilities without extensive capital costs for the Department of Education and Science. The PPP model was adopted for the development of Coláiste Fionn and the day-day management of the school facilities was given to a management company SODEXCO.

1.5.2 Historical Development of Secondary - School Amalgamations in Ireland and West Cork

I find it helpful to draw upon Kevin Healy's research which traced the origin and development of post-primary education in Ireland (Healy, 2003). It examined recent and current trends in relation to the number of, and enrolment in the various school types. The implications for Catholic schools are examined, as is the process towards amalgamation and the consequences thereof. The main question addressed in this work was - What is the future of post primary education in West Cork? – this question was answered by an assessment of the post-primary situation in 5 towns in the area. The emerging picture was of a single post-primary education system, the result of a decline in secondary school enrolment, a growth in VEC sector popularity and amalgamations between the two for reasons of viability, economics, curriculum choice, capital funding and also due to a decline in the numbers of Religious. He felt that the future of secondary schools was more secure in larger, urban areas, Healy's research concluded that the educational future of rural towns lay in single post-primary schools. (Healy, 2003, p.248).

This conclusion paralleled with the vision set out in The White Paper, *Charting our Education Future*. Despite the fact that this was never enacted, in rural towns like Bayview this had become a reality.

The policy objective will be to provide second-level schools that are large enough to adequately meet the variety of curricular demands, to meet the community education needs and to enhance the role of schools in vocational education and training and adult and continuing education. The rationalisation of second-level facilities will continue to involve consultation with all the interests concerned. Rationalisation will seek to provide single campus schools (Department of Education, p.486)

Raymond Walsh's work, *The issue of rationalisation in Irish post-primary education, 1963-96* saw him conclude:

Rationalisation has come to form a major part of the strategy of both Church and State in response to change (Walsh, 1999, p.22)

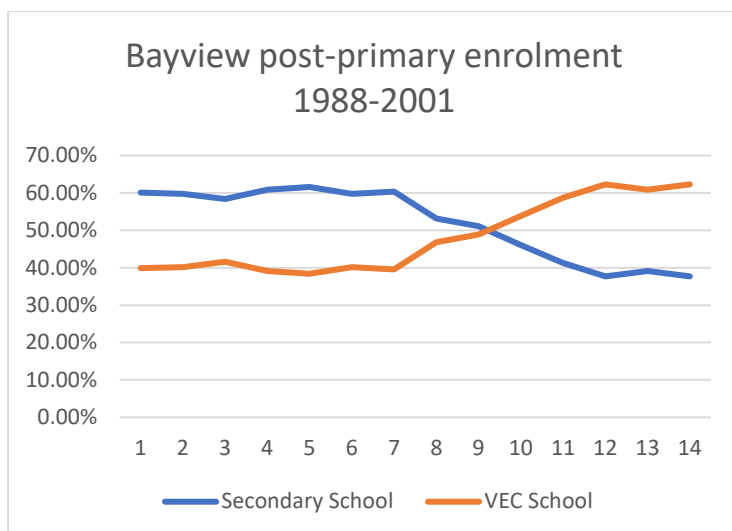
Hence all of the above studies point to the fact that Secondary School amalgamation is inevitable in towns like Bayview.

1.5.3 Local context -An analysis of Post-Primary Education in Bayview

There were two post-primary schools in Bayview. One school was a Catholic secondary school under the trusteeship of the Diocese. Until 1995, trusteeship was vested in the Sisters of Mercy, however, due to a shortage in personnel, the Sisters withdrew from trusteeship. The second school was a vocational school under the management of the county VEC. Both schools applied for grant-aid from the Department of Education and Science for extensions and remedial works between 1998 and 1999. The applications were put on hold pending investigations into viability.

School Year	Secondary School	VEC School	Totals
1988-1989	420 60.1%	279 39.9%	699
1989-1990	414 59.8%	278 40.2%	692
1990-1991	430 58.4%	306 41.6%	736
1991-1992	439 60.9%	282 39.1%	721
1992-1993	431 61.6%	269 38.4%	700
1993-1994	444 59.8%	298 40.2%	742
1994-1995	446 60.4%	292 39.6%	738
1995-1996	379 53.2%	333 46.8%	712
1996-1997	348 51.1%	333 48.9%	681
1997-1998	317 46.1%	370 53.9%	687
1998-1999	262 41.3%	373 58.7%	635
1999-2000	232 37.7%	384 62.3%	616
2000-2001	225 39.1%	350 60.9%	575
2001-2002	223 37.7%	368 62.3%	591
TOTALS	5010	4515	9525

Table 1A: Bayview post-primary enrolment, 1988-2001



(Amended chart, Healy, 2003, p.139)

Figure 1A: Bayview Post-Primary Enrolment

The above data clearly demonstrates the shift in enrolment from the secondary school to the vocational school over the 14 year time period 1988-2001. This decline in Bayview is echoed by a national decline in the number of and enrolment in secondary school.

The Department of Education and Science and the trustees of both schools wished an amalgamation to take place. There had been no real opposition to such a proposal at local level. Healy felt that the wisdom of an amalgamation was obvious.

There has been a reversal of enrolment percentages between the two schools. However, currently, the combined enrolment of both schools is just 591. This is not sufficient to sustain two schools. Furthermore, there seems to be little hope of an increase in first year enrolment for the foreseeable future. Indeed, as larger “departing” classes are replaced by smaller first year classes, overall numbers will continue to decline (Healy, 2003, p.217)

This figure illustrates the shift in enrolment from the secondary school to the vocational school has been gradual and sustained since 1994.

1.5.4 Historical Context of Post-Primary Education in Bayview

Post Primary Education started in Bayview some years ago when an order of religious sisters opened a “secondary top” to their primary school and was enhanced significantly when the

then Bishop mandated a Canon to come to the town and establish a boy's secondary school. In the 1960s both these Catholic schools amalgamated to form one of the secondary schools. Shortly afterwards the Vocational School, which operated in the Square, moved to what was known as the Tech and was the second school in question. In the 1990s both schools were in conditions that were less than what might be expected in terms of a modern post-primary school. It was in this context that the prospect of amalgamation was first raised. A model agreement was formulated in the late 90s and this was a formal legal agreement between the Diocese and the Vocational Education Committee in terms of the provision of post-primary education. The formal process began two years prior to the amalgamation when the staffs of both schools met with the then Educational Officer of the County Vocational Educational Committee and the Co-Chairperson of the Interim Board of Management. These meetings took place throughout the next two years with significant planning taking place for the opening of this new school. Task groups were formed from staff members of both existing schools. There was a chairperson and a secretary elected for each committee. The task groups addressed areas ranged from school policy, codes of behaviour, uniform, extra-curricular activities to SEN. The primary management position of College Principal was granted to the former Principal of the *Tech*, whilst the Deputy Principal position was filled by the former Principal of the Voluntary Secondary School.

In the context of Bayview, amalgamation was suggested by the Department of Education and Science in the context of deferring necessary grants to both schools. This process was discussed locally, the Board of management of the Voluntary Secondary School was met by the then Bishop, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the Unions were invited to become part of the process and the CEO of the VEC met with staff in the VEC school. The result was

a consensus amongst all involved that amalgamation represented the best way forward (Healy, 2003, p.243).

Healy's study in 2003, was a clarion cry for the amalgamation of the two secondary schools in the town of Bayview. My study comes some 10 years later when the amalgamation has taken place. I look at the human side of Secondary School amalgamation and how it has bedded in from the perspectives of those closely affected by it. How has amalgamation impacted on the unfolding identities of teacher and pupil in Bayview.

1.6 Our School –Coláiste Fionn

Mission statement

Ni neart go cur le Cheile

In partnership, through a comprehensive curriculum, we aim to provide quality teaching and learning in the pursuit of excellence, to promote intellectual, spiritual and personal development in an atmosphere of respect thus enabling students to contribute positively to their community (Coláiste Fionn website).

Official Opening

The school was officially opened by the then Minister for State at the Department of Education. He described the school as being a monument to community initiative. He said that all that had been achieved at Coláiste Fionn Designated Community College, under the co-trusteeship of the Diocese and County Vocational Education Committee meant that it was a genuine opportunity to make it a model school for the Department of Education, one that could be emulated in the new builds that were recently outlined by the Governments €1.5 billion five-year programme for educational development. The minister said he had never seen a finer range of facilities which included the cutting-edge technology in dedicated

disciplines, such as physics, chemistry, biology, information technology, art, engineering, construction and multi-media, as well as a PE department that has a unique fitness suite, five hard courts, a full-size sports pitch and a seriously impressive sports hall. There is also bling in each of the classrooms: every general classroom comes equipped with personal computers and an overhead data projector while many rooms have an interactive whiteboard. The college also has a dedicated SNU, which comprises of two base classrooms, a multi-sensory room, a para-educational room, a daily living skills room and its own outdoor activity area.

1.6.1 School Awards Night

More than 500 guests attended the inaugural school awards ceremony in the school's magnificent sports hall on April 26th 2012. This represented a very significant event in the school calendar because it allowed parents, relatives, staff members and the school's management an opportunity to recognise the curricular and extra-curricular accomplishments of the students. The guest of honour on the night was a prominent sports star. He was chosen, as he is the embodiment of dedication, determination, and hard work and is a real team player – all vital components in achieving success both on and off the field. All the guests listened attentively as he spoke about his career and the importance of his mentors, coaches and parents. He urged the students to value their own mentors, coaches and parents; to be confident; have self-belief; and come to the realisation that there is always support for them. Individuals and groups were presented with awards for their achievements in a wide range of sporting, cultural and artistic endeavours, ranging from road bowling and basketball to mentoring and mini-company initiatives.

1.7 Self as Context –My own story of learning

It probably more sense to talk about how learning acquires people more than it makes sense to talk about how people acquire learning. Individually we may spend our time trying to learn, but this phenomenon pales before the fact that however hard we try we can only learn what is around us to be learned (McDermott, 1996, p. 277).

McDermott highlights that we must shift our gaze away from what is in a learner's head, away from the mind as brain and to view the mind as distributed. We must look to the opportunities available and to the positions that are held out for us. It is against this that I nest the story of my own professional journey and highlight the key experiences that shaped my learning trajectory over the last 23 years. This text must be deconstructed and reconstructed as my identity both as a person and a teacher has an origin and is shaped and reshaped in the moment-to-moment interactions of the everyday. I completed my Bachelor of Commerce Degree in University College Cork in 1994 and went on to do my Higher Diploma in Education at the same college. I spent the first year after my graduation working in a grind school on Patrick Street. Here learning was very much entwined with the transfer of knowledge. My students were vessels to be filled. I worked there on Saturday mornings fattening primary school children for the dreaded entrance examinations to secondary schools. The following year I travelled to work in a Co-educational Community school in Co. Cavan. I found this a very challenging post, as I was a young teacher who grappled with the challenges of classroom management and subject content. I was glad to return home to Co. Cork the following year. I spent the next 10 years of my teaching career working in two single sex girls Voluntary Secondary Schools in East Cork. It was during this time that I began studying the Modular Masters in Education. I undertook the six- module route and I found studying the required modules a mind changing experience. In particular the module- Learning as Identity opened a door for me into a new view of learning: the social, participative model. This

thinking forms the bedrock of this research study. I am grateful to Professor Kathy Hall and also Dr. Anne Rath for facilitating this mindset. The daily commute of 150 miles to work could not be sustained and in September 2007 I was lucky to secure a teaching position near home. I eagerly awaited this job as the new school so talked about was on its way. My new teaching position was in the town of Bayview in the Voluntary Secondary School which had only 217 pupils. It was a co-educational secondary school. It was a school with a long tradition of academic excellence. The core values of the school are summarised in the crest. The Latin motto **ut melius sint** means, **in order that they may improve**. It was a school where blackboards and chalk dominated. I was the main Business Studies teacher in the school and I did not have to confer with any subject department colleagues. I worked here for four years prior to the amalgamation. During the two years prior to amalgamation both staffs met a number of times and formed task groups. I thoroughly enjoyed this work and found the amalgamation days a great way of bonding for all staff.

1.8 Justification for the research and role of researcher

The loss of school identity of the former schools has at times been a cause of grief for patrons, past students and local communities. This loss often makes the experience of amalgamation, a difficult, fraught emotional experience (CSA, 2001, p.12)

The objective of an amalgamation of schools is to provide an enhanced educational environment for students with an efficient supply of resources. The focus tends to be on the efficiency of the amalgamation process and the micro-management issues that ensue. Little is known about how the formation of one school from two existing schools in the process of amalgamation, impacts on the identities of those most affected – teacher and pupil.

Thus, this study which explores this everyday unfolding of identity in a newly amalgamated second level school setting is opportune.

As a dual teacher and researcher in the newly amalgamated school from its foundation, I was able to capture the sights and sounds of this experience for the school's teachers and pupils perspectives. I was the primary data gathering instrument, using guiding questions aimed at understanding a phenomenon through focus groups, diary entries and semi-structured interviews with the people involved and in their own surroundings. These methods relied on my interactional, adaptive, and judgemental abilities to study participants in everyday life with particular attention to the processes through which people make meaning.

1.9 Thesis overview

Following this introductory chapter, I present a review of literature in relation to identity, narrative and communities of practice spanning three chapters. In chapter 2, I build my definition of identity that will then be developed in chapters 3 and 4. I discuss how socio-cultural theory and the key ideas of Lev Vygotsky play a foundational role in this unfolding definition of identity. I conclude this chapter with an examination of some empirical studies which capture the key theoretical concepts of my study and serve to strengthen the overall theoretical frame for this research.

Chapter 3 develops the sociocultural framework introduced in chapter 2. In this chapter I take a deeper look at the emergence of identity through narrative and interaction. I draw upon the Rodgers and Scott framework regarding the social formation and development of identity, as a means of developing ideas in this chapter.

Chapter 4 explores Wenger's theory of learning that is rooted in the fact that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which people learn and construct identities in relation to their communities. His work focuses on the informal "communities of practice" that people form as they pursue shared enterprises over time. He builds a conceptual framework that allows me to look at learning and identity building as a process of social participation (1998). This framework forms the backbone of this final literature chapter as I extend my definition of identity making in the context of our lived experience of participation in Coláiste Fionn.

Chapter 5 provides an outline of the Research Design using the theory of the educational research to frame the research process used in this study. The subsequent three chapters present and analyse the research findings. Chapter 6 explores how identity is negotiated through sport. Chapter 7 presents findings as regards how identities are negotiated through narrative, while the final findings chapter 8 provides in-depth analysis of how identities are negotiated in communities of practice. The final chapter, Chapter 9, discusses the conclusions and implications resulting from the research findings.

1.10 Conclusion

In summary this study seeks to give voice to the unfolding identities of both teacher and pupil in a newly amalgamated secondary school setting. I hope that this study will give an insight into a changed school life and highlight the positive aspects of amalgamation. I also hope that it will introduce readers to the idea that people are truly made and unmade by each other in everyday social spaces.

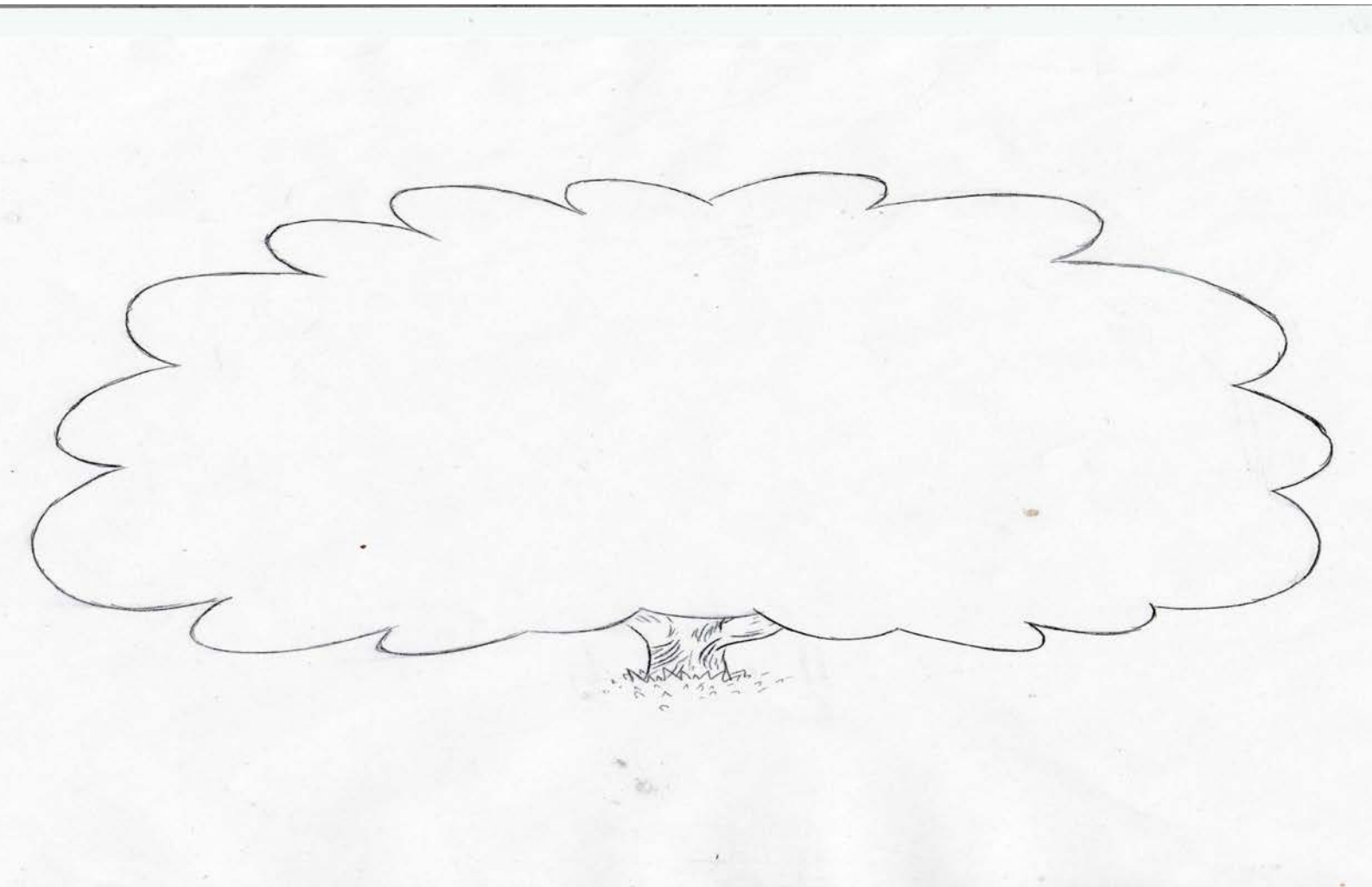
This chapter has given an outline of why this study was undertaken, the focus of the study along with the guiding themes that I will pursue. I also presented an overview of the chapters and my own journey of learning. In the next three chapters I will address the literature pertaining to my workable definition of identity.

Chapter 2

Among School Children

By William Butler Yeats

Figure 2A: Chestnut tree



Among School Children By William Butler Yeats

III

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil,
O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you a leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightened glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?
W.B Yeats (1928)

Chapter 2: Identity unfolds in the moment-to-moment

2.1 Introduction

Specialised discourses and practices, each predicating a figured world and each realised in a variety of positional identities, exist in all societies...people's lives take shape among the identifications, figured and relational, that are arranged within the space of their activity (Holland et al, 2003, p.148).

Identity building is a complex process and has been discussed at length by many educational researchers. This chapter will develop current theorisations of identity building through social interaction by teacher and by pupil in a newly amalgamated secondary school setting.

The main purpose of this chapter is to offer a definition of identity that will then be developed in the next two chapters. I consider how identity is occasioned in every-day, moment to moment encounters. I outline some of the key theoretical threads of my argument: that identity indeed unfolds through social interaction, is performed, negotiated and involves other people and their histories of participation.

I begin with a discussion of socio-cultural theory and how the key ideas of Lev Vygotsky play a foundational role in my unfolding definition of identity. I then explain how other key authors have extended these key ideas. In so doing I draw upon key theoretical concepts from theorists who are firmly rooted in the wider socio-cultural theoretical approach, theorists such as Dorothy Holland, Barbara Rogoff, Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave who strongly inform my research. I will then look at the place of sport in education from a socio-cultural perspective as central to learning and identity building. Finally, I examine some empirical studies, such as Deborah Hick's work on Jake which capture the key theoretical concepts of my study and serve to strengthen the overall theoretical frame for this research.

Table 2A: Theoretical Framework

	Holland	Rogoff	Wenger	Lave
Theoretical concepts	Figured worlds <i>Alcoholics</i> <i>Anonymous</i>	Personal <i>Apprenticeship</i>	Participation	Agent/activity/World
	<i>World of Romance</i>	Interpersonal <i>Guided participation</i>	Reification	<i>Vai and Gola Tailor Apprenticeship</i>
	Positional Identities	Community <i>Participatory Appropriation</i>	The negotiation of meaning/identity	
	<i>Caste Identity</i>	<i>Girl Scout Cookie Sales</i>	<i>Alinsu -Medical claims processing</i>	

The research questions for this study will be filtered through the above theoretical concepts and socio-cultural theory in what I envisage as a conceptual filtration funnel (see Appendix 1 – Conceptual Filtration Funnel). My own theory will emerge through the findings.

2.2 Definition of Identity

The focus of this chapter is to unpack the main tools for identity building in social practice. Focusing on the socially constructed and culturally figured nature of identity formation, I argue that identity is performed in the everyday. It unfolds through social interaction. It is performed and negotiated with the people around us. It encompasses their histories of participation and through the medium of participation in figured worlds we develop a view of ourselves in relation to those around us. It is through participation in practice that we develop a sense of self within the communities of practice that we participate in. Mind is a truly social and cultural phenomenon as our social interactions and use of cultural tools become our experiences for learning and identity formation in the everyday.

The core of my definition of identity stems from the work of Dorothy Holland et al (2001) and is pivotal to any understanding of the complex process of identity building, formed in multiple contexts, in relationship with others and constructed and reconstructed overtime. Her vision emphasises that identities are improvised in the everyday flow of activity, within specific social situations, from the cultural resources at hand. People are caught between the past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses and images that attract them. It is often through the medium of figured worlds that people are able to construct their identities and to author a self. Any group engaging in jointly creating and participating in a figured world, day-to-day practices, always position the participants situationally, relative to one another. As people develop a view of themselves in relation to others in a given social context, these moment-to-moment encounters are the building blocks of identity formation. Barbara Rogoff's contribution to my definition of identity is her view that identity development occurs at the personal, interpersonal and community level through participation in practice (Rogoff, 2003). This theory provides evidence of identity making involving the participation of individuals with others in cultural practices. Etienne Wenger (1991), agrees with Rogoff's view when she sees participation as a source of identity. It is through this social experience of living in the world that we engage in practices with other people, negotiate meaning and become who we are. The final thread woven into this theoretical argument is contributed by Jean Lave (1988). She believes that identity is fluid. It changes depending on what we are doing, where we are and who we are with. Her concept of the mutually constituted nature of agent, activity and world shares the performed nature of identity. She shines a spot light on the fact that when we act, we do so as historically located individuals created by our personal histories of participation. Through the linking together of these main theoretical concepts from the above theorists there emerges a

compelling definition of identity for this research. It speaks of identity as fluid, relational, performed, negotiated with other people and enmeshed in their histories of participation.

In the next section, I outline the significance of the sociocultural framework and in particular my key argument that learning occurs in the everyday (Lave, 1988). The sociocultural understanding of self and mind again places the individual within a community, as relational, shared, emergent, mediated and distributed by the world in which we live and those we share it with. This is important for the making of selves that is after all identity building.

2.3 Mind – a social and cultural phenomenon

The sociocultural framework:

One of the founding fathers of the sociocultural mindset was Lev Vygotsky. The major thrust of Vygotsky's work was his proposition that all human mental functioning is socio-culturally, historically and institutionally situated (Wretch, 1985, 1991). Vygotsky examined development as a process of transformation of individual functioning as various forms of social practice become internalised by individuals (Wertsch, 1985, 1991). For him, sociocultural processes have a kind of analytic primacy over individual functioning. Vygotsky's sociocultural approach claims that human action is mediated by tools and signs. Vygotsky deemed tools, language, and other sign systems important not simply as representational systems but as resources in action. The mediational properties of signs are not ancillary but related to thinking and other higher mental processes (Vygotsky, 1987).

He claims that a sign is always originally a means used for social purposes, a means of inducing others, and only later becomes a means of influencing oneself (Vygotsky, 1981,

p.157). Hence Vygotsky's work, through his conclusion that the mind is a socially mediated phenomenon, is central in recognising the pivotal role played by sociocultural processes in shaping identity. Mind and learning do not exist in individual heads. Learning and cognition are both situated in group activity (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and distributed across group participation (Rogoff, 1995). These contributions again support my argument that identities are acquired through participation in the communities that we participate in. This argument is strengthened when I now take a deeper look at the fundamentals of socio-cultural theory.

A fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is the idea that mind is a culturally and socially mediated phenomenon (Vygotsky, 1981). This cultural mediation occurs through the use of cultural tools and artefacts such as language, symbols and shared representation. The social mediation occurs through our interactions with others as we go about the habitual day-to-day experience. Learning occurs in the everyday (Lave, 1988). As we go about our day-to-day lives, we layer experiences and identities over one another. Identity and learning is embedded in networks from a sociocultural perspective as knowledge is defined not as a hand me down but as a joint creation shared and mediated in an onsite reconstruction of experience. As social beings we do this so well that it becomes an implicit and tacit part of the learning process. We tell ourselves stories every-day and it is through these stories that we come to experience the world as meaningful. This narrative development of identity will be developed in the next chapter. The sociocultural understanding of self and mind places the individual within a community, as relational, shared, emergent, mediated and distributed by the world in which we live and those we share it with. The sociocultural view sees culture as emerging in practice. It is not an entity. It is through enactment, practice, as people participate in activity that culture becomes observable. We endow an identity with meaning through our engagement in practice (Hall et al, 2014, p.60) through engaging in practice with

others, and through living culturally. We negotiate ways of being in that culture. We produce, reproduce and transform that culture as we engage in it.

The second aspect of sociocultural is of course its social dimension. Cultural scripts and reifications are part of the social order. A sociocultural analysis brings to the fore the wider social milieu in which that person is embedded. The focus is on what is going on around the person, the social engagement and the experience of negotiating meaning for ourselves through our practice of everything we do. The social embeddedness of the individual in the world is a central aspect of the theory. It is this idea that identity building is the development of self within the communities in which participate (Hall et al, 2014, p.37) that forms the core of this study. Again, it is of great consequence to emphasise the pivotal role played by social relations in identity making. The importance of social relations is explored further in the next section of this chapter as I take a closer look at how other key authors have extended these main ideas of socio-cultural theory. They serve to unify and develop a clearer understanding of identity building.

This concept of identity is built on the premise that identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualised as they develop in social practice. These relations are a necessary ingredient for identity transformations. Holland et al (2008, p.188) use Voloshinov to emphasise the situated nature of Identity and Identity construction. They emphasise the developmental flow of identity that is dependent at all times on its “immediate social situation” (Voloshinov, 1986, p.5). Dialogism lies at the core of the theory of identity in Holland et al (2008). They state that.

Dialogism makes clear that what we call identities remain dependent upon social relations and material conditions. If these relations and material conditions change, they must be “answered”, and old “answers” about who one is may be undone (Holland et al, 2008:189).

This provides evidence of the dualistic nature and structure and forces of human agency.

There is a clear interplay between the outside world and the inside person in the quest for meaning making and identity formation. I will now explore some of the key aspects of figured worlds and demonstrate how they impact on identity making.

This next section of the chapter will focus on unpacking the concept of figured worlds. It will explore how figured worlds come to engage people, to shape and be shaped by their actions. I will demonstrate figured worlds in action through the work of Holland et al have conducted on Alcoholics Anonymous. This work argues that figured worlds transform identities, and it explores how new identities gain salience. I will subsequently examine the concept of positionality and discover that figured worlds have their own valued qualities and means of assessing social worth as evidenced by the caste system. This section of the chapter illuminates the importance of figured worlds in the identity building process in every day moment to moment encounters.

2.4 Identity performed and negotiated-shaped in Figured Worlds

The concept of figured worlds conveys the fact that it is through social encounters that participants’ position matter. People take form building an understanding of themselves as agents in the figured worlds. Identities are unstable, especially as they are introduced to the new figured worlds and continue to undergo development in concert with other participants in new spheres of activity. Their identities remain multiple, as people’s trajectories through figured worlds neither take one path nor remain in one cultural space. Identities constitute an

enduring aspect of history- in –person, and is a pivotal element brought by them to new activities and new figured worlds. I will now illuminate some of the key concepts of Dorothy Holland that explore how people reshape their sense of self and negotiate their cultural or “figured” worlds in a new space.

In a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland et al, 2003, p.52).

Figured worlds are very important as it is within these that constructions of identity act, interact and are played out (Holland et al, 2008:151). Hall (2008) describe a figured world as a historical or social phenomenon, into which individuals enter or are recruited and which is then reproduced or developed through the practices of their participants. In this world, particular characters and actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. The ability to sense the figured world becomes embodied over time, through continual participation (Holland, 2003).

Holland et al (2001, p.66) demonstrate figured worlds in action through their telling of how Alcoholics Anonymous functions. They see identity as the way people understand and view themselves, and are viewed by others. Through their membership of AA, they transform their identities from drinking non-alcoholics to non-drinking alcoholics. They enter or are recruited into a new figured world, a new frame of understanding. The use of the personal story is a key cultural vehicle for members’ identity transformation. In telling personal stories, old timers in AA tell their own life stories and newcomer AA members learn the AA story model. Telling AA stories is a way of demonstrating that one has mastered the appropriate understandings.

Hence the AA member undergoes a kind of reorientation in self-understanding as a new identity is formed. This is accomplished through the member reinterpreting their life as an AA story. New members begin to compare their lives to AA old timers. They begin to see

that other members are like themselves and they are in turn like them. The identity of alcoholic gains salience and takes a more central place in the conception of self. Learning from the stories and statements of others, new members begin to craft their own stories in social interaction. In addition to the structure of the AA story, the newcomer is also learning the figured world of alcoholism. The stories are cultural mediating devices as they act as tools for reinterpreting the past and putting the self into the figured world of AA.

Newcomers to AA must give up an old identity, that of normal drinker, and develop a new one. They go through a process of identity devaluation followed by a process of identity formation. The way in which this takes place is through the personal story. This AA story is a cultural device that newcomers can learn to produce and use to mediate self-understanding. The newcomer learns to tell their own life as an AA personal story, and through this, to understand their life as an AA life and themselves as an AA person. Hence individuals and groups are always engaged in forming identities and self-understandings. These identities are improvised in the flow of activity within specific social situations. My research is a specific social situation in which identities are also improvised in the flow of activity.

Holland et al continue to develop the concept of figured worlds as they explore how the figured worlds of romance become desire. They demonstrate how figured worlds come to engage people, to shape and be shaped by their actions. They demonstrate that figured worlds are not just conceptual, they actually happen. They become constructed through people's participation in social practices and activities. In their study of student college life, they intended investigating how women's peer groups affect their choice of career. They discovered that the figured world of romance acquired motivating force as the women developed mastery of it, and their mastery depended on their development of a concept of themselves as actors in the world of romance. The salience of the world of romance varied for the women in the study. For some the figured world of romance had a very high level of

salience as they saw everyday life through the lens of the figured world of romance. For others the salience of romance changed over the course of the study. Sandy was one of the research participants that demonstrated the differing levels of salience of romance. She formed a special friendship with a woman called Leslie. Her parents were concerned that she was not applying herself to college, but she pursued her friendship despite their concerns.

Our friendship is terrific...I just would like to spend more time...it's all been crammed into one semester...there's probably not gonna be another time in my life when I can sit down and just make friends (Holland et al, 2003, p.106).

Even though Sandy had begun her college year with a professed interest in romantic relationships with men, such romantic attachments became less salient for her. Her identity as an attractive woman in the world of romance, as culturally construed, became unimportant. In general, the women's individual social situations and histories influenced their varying degrees of recruitment to this figured world of romance. It is evident from the insights of Alcoholics Anonymous and the world of romance how people shape and become shaped by the figured worlds that they occupy. This aligns with Rogoff's Appropriation (Rogoff, 1995), as the world is itself reproduced through the forming and reforming practices of participants. Figured worlds are formed and reformed in relation to the everyday activities and events that are happening in the cultural and social space.

Figured worlds take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances, and artefacts (Holland et al, 2001, p.51).

The situated nature of identity in collectively formed, socially produced and culturally constructed through activities in what is called figured worlds (Holland et al, 2003, p.41). Figured worlds happen, as social process and in historical time. They are created and re-created by actors' social engagement with each other in particular, localised spaces. These spaces provide people with social and cultural meaning. Through their participation in figured worlds, people can come to reconceptualise what and who they are or change their self-identities, individually or as members of a collective.

As identity unfolds in the moment-to-moment it is important that I outline the whole notion of positional identity. In the next section of this chapter I will exemplify the concept of positional identities and how it is so closely entwined with figured worlds.

2.5 Interactional Positional Identities:

As figured worlds are always embedded in systems of social relations, they are socially organised around positions of rank and influence and are populated by social personages. A positioning perspective helps us understand the way in which people comprehend and enact their positions. AA members' personal stories in AA meetings not only mediate identity but index claims to certain social relationships, positions and perspectives.

Spaces, too, imbue and are imbued by the kinds of persons who frequent them; conventional forms of activity likewise become impersonated. The dialect we speak, the degree of formality we adopt in our speech, the deeds we do, the places we go, the emotions we express, and the clothes we wear are treated as indicators of claims to and identification with social categories and positions of privilege relative to those with whom we are interacting (Holland et al, 2003, p. 127).

The concept of *positional identities* forwarded by Dorothy Holland, William Lachicotte Jr, Debra Skinner and Carole Cain (2001) is closely entwined with the figured worlds inhabited. It is another facet of lived identities. It is a very important concept to explore further in that whilst agents may choose an identity in a given situation, that choice is always constrained. It depends on the affordances of the situation. Holland et al demonstrate vividly how figured worlds have their own valued qualities and means of assessing social worth. In carry out interviews in Naudada, a rural hill community in Nepal, an incident occurred that gives a first- hand picture of the social significance of a caste identity. Debra Skinner and Dorothy Holland were interviewing on the second-floor balcony of a three-story house. They were about to interview a woman called Gyanumaya. Debra Skinner called down to her that they wanted to interview her on the balcony, intending to bring her through the kitchen and up the

stairs. Gyanumaya took a different route and scaled the outside of the house. She crawled up the vertical outside wall and made her way around the balcony to an opening in the railing. She climbed up the house because it was her way of not going through the house and polluting the hearth of another person. This event was very significant for Holland as it prompted her to unravel the cultural significance of caste and pollution learned from childhood, which was an essential force inside Gyanumaya, directing her behaviour. Hence, positionality is about the way in which behaviour signals the nature of one's social relations with others. As my view of identity in this chapter is built on identity formation in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment encounters, participants positionality or social relations with one another is a central aspect of their identities and the kind of people they become. It focuses on a person's apprehension of their social position in a lived world. It depends on the others present, also their greater or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres, and, through those genres, authoritative voices, or any voice at all. Positioning is a central aspect of my argument for the social development of identity. It is a good metaphor for understanding how people place themselves socially in interaction or take stances relative to those of other people, thereby serving to explain the meaning of those actions. Both positionality and figured worlds are conceptually rich in demonstrating how identities unfold in moment-by-moment interactions.

Positional identities depend on who is present in the interaction (Holland et al, 2001). This is central to the kind of people we are allowed to become. Ray McDermott captures very well how people can be positioned or bounded by others. In his 2001 study, the acquisition by a child of a learning disability he illustrates how Adam has been labelled as learning disabled by the school system. Learning Disability is a category made real by the school system and it is a position that will be occupied. Adam is labelled: this is how he is positioned and as a result the opportunities for him to develop his identity are bounded.

It probably makes more sense to talk about how learning acquires people more than it makes sense to talk about how people acquire learning. Individually we may spend our time trying to learn, but this phenomenon pales before the fact that however hard we try we can only learn what is around us to be learned (McDermott, 1996, p.277).

Hence for McDermott, identity unfolds in the everyday spaces and we become who we are allowed to become. Learning is a shift in identity and positionality, is a stepping stone into a learning space involving other people. It is this learning that leads to identity transformation.

In any group engaged in jointly creating and participating in a figured world, day-to-day practices always position the participants situationally, relative to one another.

Positional identities have to do with the day-to-day, on the ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance with the social-interactive, social-relational structures of the lived world (Holland et al, 2001, p.127).

The unfolding of identity in the everyday sees participants in collaborative activities engage in conversation and interaction that serves to construct their own social position and their social relations with one another. (Holland et al, 2001:133). Hence identity in these terms is relational and can be explored through descriptions of daily activity and social relations in practice. Identity traces our participation in activities and is formed in these moment by moment interactions. The individual must be motivated to engage in the field of practice modelled by mature practitioners, who offer images of future identities. Mature participants must in turn be open to the transformative possibilities that may result from participation by newcomers. hence other people become the active instruments of one's agency. We must be mindful that even though this research site is a dynamic place with boundless possibilities for the making of new selves, people can be positioned and bound up by those around them. My view of learning as a shift in identity sees people allowed to display different competencies as they shift their participation. They can be positioned differently and their experience and participation have the power to transform them in the every- day encounters of this social

space. As any group engaged in jointly creating and participating in a figured world, day-to-day practices will call upon participants to make sense of this space in their quest for a new identity. In the next section of the chapter I will explore how participants make sense of their figured worlds and learn to author a self from within.

It is through participation in a world with particular designs, structures, constraints and opportunities that identities become positioned. This newly amalgamated school is a new world that has to be discovered by its new participants. It will take time for the opportunities to develop for its participants. Identities are relational at all times, in that relational identity has to do with how one identifies one's position relative to others. (Holland et al, 2001:127). Some positional identities and their associated markers are clearly figured. These figured aspects of relational identities become relatively conscious for anyone successfully recruited into the figured world (Holland et al, 2001:140). These positional identities develop heuristically over time. People may develop a sense of their worlds, an expertise in the use of cultural artefacts, that may come to re-mediate their positions in them. These positional identities are arrived at over the long term. The long term happens through day-to-day encounters and is built, again and again, by means of artefacts, or indices of positioning, that newcomers gradually learn to identify themselves with, either positively or negatively, through either acceptance or rejection.

This next section continues to develop theoretical perspectives around figured worlds and how people make their mark on new spaces within them. This ensures that identities are indeed made in the everyday through daily interaction with those around us. Some identities become salient in different situations. This occurs as one engages in and performs practices, as we assume identities. This practice is of course always historical and evolves overtime. It has a context and a history which has to be recognised. I will explore the mediational tools,

like language, that help participants to shape figured worlds and author their place in the story.

Holland continues to aid our understanding of how these identities grow and develop when she describes the space of authoring. This authorship is not a choice. It is a matter of orchestration and the arrangement of the social discourses and practices available. Hence in meaning making we author the world. The author works within or against a set of constraints. Language is not neutral.

All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and the contexts in which one has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions (Holland et al, 2003, p.171).

In essence, Holland et al. argue that our *authored* self is a fusion of how we see ourselves, how we are seen by others, and how we see others as seeing ourselves. Figured worlds and their situated realisations, rendered collectively and personally as spaces of authoring, are socially animated by groupings that may not be reified as social groups. The politics of participation in figured worlds, more specifically who may enter the social circle of a group of teachers or pupils and how members gain or lose place among themselves will determine the space for authoring available to my research participants. In the next section of this chapter I will explore further how figured worlds are opened up to participants through mediational means. Mediational means are the shaping resources for the acting and performing of the self and hence the carving tools of identities.

Holland et al, introduces the idea of *making worlds*, as a means of identity building, reshaping selves and lives. Children’s play is instrumental in the building of their symbolic competencies. In a similar way, adults must engage in social play in order to develop new social competencies in newly imagined communities. Play is viewed as the medium of mastery of ourselves as human actors. It is the opening out of thought within the activity of

play that allows for the emergence of new figured worlds, or of refiguring worlds that reshape selves and lifestyles. Bakhtin (1981), contends that having a space for authoring is central to the development of identity and this is now rationalised.

2.6 Developing a space for authoring

For Bakhtin the *space of authoring* is a very important one in the development of identities as aspects of history-in-person. The world must be answered –authorship is not a choice-but the form of the answer is not predetermined. The meaning that we make of ourselves is, in Bakhtin’s terms, *authoring the self*, and the site at which this authoring occurs is a space defined by the interrelationship of differentiated vocal perspectives on the social world (Holland, 2003, p.173). In Bakhtin’s system, the self is a position from which meaning is made, a position that is addressed by and answers others and the world. In answering the self, one authors the world- including itself and others.

Holland argues that identities are mediated by cultural artefacts. Artefacts provide a means to evoke a figured world because of their association with certain people and social practices. This underlines the importance of social relations in the formation of identities. Figured worlds rely upon artefacts. Figured worlds are evinced in practice through the artefacts employed by people in their performances. Artefacts open up figured worlds, as they are a means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learnt, and made socially and personally powerful (Holland, 2003:61). The meanings that people learn to ascribe to these artefacts as typical of a figured world, and of the social types that populate them are part of collectively formed systems of meaning and products of social history. This idea is central to my definition of identity as the development of self in the communities you participate in.

Drawing on the work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin and others, James Wretch talks about mediated action which is a term designed to bridge the gap between the person and the social world or socio-historical context in which the person lives. Mediated action is about how a person's actions and interactions are accomplished by the use of mediational means or cultural tools. Mediational means are shaping resources for acting or performing the self, examples being language, words, forms of discourse, ideology and artefacts. What mediational means people appropriate and how they appropriate them are of significance in understanding identity formation. It is important to remember that they are acquired in participation and interaction with others and are therefore distributed (Hall, 2008). This research will look at some of the mediational means that the actors use to act and perform the self and in so doing fashion new identities.

This section of the chapter focuses on unpacking the concept of figured worlds. It explores how figured worlds come to engage people, to shape and be shaped by their actions. I demonstrated figured worlds in action through the work of Holland et al on Alcoholics Anonymous. This work argues that figured worlds transform identities, and how new identities gain salience. Holland et al also conclude that the figured world of romance becomes desire when it acquires motivating force as women develop mastery of it. I looked at the concept of positionality and discovered that figured worlds have their own valued qualities and means of assessing social worth as evidenced by the caste system. Figured worlds are accessed and opened up by mediational means and play is a means of unearthing new figured worlds as well as refiguring existing figured worlds. This section of the chapter copper-fastens the importance of figured worlds in the identity building process in every day moment to moment encounters. These everyday social interactions take place through participation in practices and I will now examine identity making in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world. This is a key aspect of my unfolding definition of

identity which is very much entwined in figured worlds but is deserving of further examination in this chapter.

2.7 Identity unfolds through social interaction

Participation in practice: taking part in our world

Participation is the process of taking part in the world and the social experience of living in the world. This day-to-day practice of taking part is the nuts and bolts of identity making. It is how identity is occasioned in the everyday. Wenger (1998, p.4) views participation as involving participants becoming active in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. I support this view and will now concentrate on amplifying two of Wenger's key concepts in relation to practice: meaning and identity in terms of participation and reification. These concepts align with my view of identity making unfolding in everyday social spaces. I will explore identity building in communities of practice in chapter 4.

Participation refers to the processes of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process. It is the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises (Wenger, 2008, p.55).

Wenger (2008, p.4), clearly views participation as not only the local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people but as a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. This participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do.

We all belong to communities of practice and this idea is developed further in chapter 4. For Wenger participation is both personal and social. It is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging. Wenger feels as we engage in conversation,

we recognise in each other something of ourselves which we address. This recognition is related to our mutual ability to negotiate meaning. The relations between teacher and pupil are mutual in the sense that participants shape each other's experiences of meaning. In this experience of mutuality, participation is a source of identity. Wenger sees a defining characteristic of participation as the possibility of developing what he calls "an identity of participation". This is viewed as an identity constituted through relations of participation (Wenger, 2008, p. 56). the concept of participation uniquely captures the profoundly social character of our experience of life.

Wenger coins the word reification as a concept to describe our engagement with the world as productive of meaning. We tend to project our meanings into the world and then we perceive them as existing in the world, as having a reality of their own (Wenger, 2008, p.58). In participation we recognise ourselves in each other while in reification we project ourselves onto the world. Both these complex theoretical concepts are illustrated (see appendix 2 and appendix 3). The process of reification is central to every practice. Any community of practice produces abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of that practice in a congealed form (Wenger, 1998, p.59). But Wenger feels that no abstraction, tool, or symbol actually captures in its form the practices in context of which it contributes to an experience of meaning.

In all these cases, aspects of human experience and practice are congealed into fixed forms and given the status of object. Reification shapes our experience. It can do so in a very concrete way. Having a tool to perform an activity changes the nature of that activity. Having to automate the student attendance records reifies a view of that activity, but also changes how one goes about the activity. Hence reification is both a process and its product. If meaning exists only in its negotiation, at the level of meaning, the process and the product are not distinct. Reification is not just objectification. It does not simply translate meaning

into an object. Wenger feels that the process and the product always imply each other.

Teachers are not the designers of the rules and forms they use, yet they must absorb them into their practice. In an institutional environment such as a second-level school, a very large portion of the reification involved in work practices comes from outside the communities of teachers, from sources like the Department of Education, or Education and Training Board. The computerised recording of pupil attendance has come “down the pipe”. This reification must be seamlessly re-appropriated into a local process in order for it to become meaningful. Wenger tells us that most human activities produce marks in the physical world. He calls these marks vestiges. A teacher may spend much time correcting a student script. These marks freeze fleeting moments in practice into monuments, which persist and disappear in their own time. They can then be reintegrated as reification into new moments of negotiation of meaning.

If an organisation has created a statement of values for example in its mission statement, it has created a reification of something that does or should pervade the organisation. Though this “something” is probably much more diffuse and intangible in practice, it gains a new concreteness once framed and displayed in the lobby and written in the school journal. It becomes something that people can point to, refer to, strive for. Wenger contents that the concept of reification suggests that forms can take a life of their own (Wenger, 1991, p.62). They gain a degree of autonomy from the occasion and the purposes of their production. Their meaningfulness is always potentially expanded and potentially lost. Reification as a constituent of meaning is always incomplete, ongoing, potentially enriching and possibly misleading. The duality of participation and reification is illustrated well (see appendix 4). In their interplay, participation and reification are both distinct and complementary. Conversely, the production of such a reification is crucial to the kind of negotiation that is

necessary for them to act as students and to bring together the multiple perspectives, interests, and interpretations that participation entails.

Participation and reification cannot be considered in isolation. They come as a pair. They form a unity in their duality, to understand one it is necessary to understand the other, they come about through each other, but they cannot replace each other (Wenger, 2008, p.62).

Each makes up for the short comings of the other and Wenger argues that both of these concepts are necessary for the negotiation of meaning. It is this opportunity to learn and negotiate new identities that is fundamental to the creation of communities of practice in this new place. He also feels that in life we produce precisely the reifications we need in order to proceed with the practices in which we participate.

The threads of reification and participation can be woven tightly— they are in fact enmeshed. The use of language in school experience is a catalyst in this process. Words are projections of human meaning and are a form of reification. Our classrooms and corridors are adorned with text-driven reifications ranging from subject specifications to school policy documentation. In face-to-face interactions speech is extremely evanescent. It is the tight interweaving of reification and participation that makes conversations such a powerful form of communication. The world of school is heavily textualized and verbalised. The power of words is evident in the poem- There is a Word, by Emily Dickenson. The poem is about how one single word can make a person feel helpless and down. It can “pierce an armed man”. These same words can cause “muteness”. But no matter where it is used, it can cause victory.

There Is a Word
By Emily Dickinson

There is a word
Which bears a sword
Can pierce an armed man.

It hurls its barbed syllables, --
At once is mute again.
But where it fell
The saved will tell
On Patriotic day,
Some epauletted brother
Gave his Breath away.

The negotiation of meaning weaves participation and reification so seamlessly that meaning seems to have its own unitary, self-contained existence. What it means to be a person and what it means to be a thing both involve an interplay between participation and reification, people and things do not have to be posited as a point of departure. They need not be assumed as given to start with. It is engagement in social practice that provides the baseline. Through the negotiation of meaning, it is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are. In this interplay, our experience and our world shape each other.

the world as we shape it, and our experience as the world shapes it, are like the mountain and the river. They shape each other, but they have their own shape (Wenger, 2008, p.71).

The above quote captures the essence of the duality of meaning that exists between participation and reification. It is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are. Engagement in social practice is the stimulus for this interplay. Our experience and our world shape each other through a reciprocal relation that goes to the heart of who we are. Just like the mountain and the river, the world and our experience as the world shapes it, are reflections of each other but have their own existence. They meander around each other, but remain distinct units. This is akin to the social

meanderings that occur throughout the day to day social interactions of social communities. They too cannot be transformed into each other but they can transform each other. The powerful forces that each brings to bear on the other is poignantly illustrated in the extension of the metaphor of the mountain and the river by Wenger when he concludes.

The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interaction, the carving becomes the guiding and the guiding becomes the carving (Wenger, 2008, p.71).

It is of course through the medium of practice and participation that the participants impress on each other.

Wenger unravels his concepts by sharing the life of one community of practice- that of claims processing. His ethnographic work illustrates fieldwork in a medical claims processing centre operated by a large U.S. insurance company which he calls- Alinsu. Wenger gives a detailed account of one working day in the life of a claim's processor -Ariel. This allows him to provide a view of a community of practice from the standpoint of a participant. This work is used by him to explore the concepts of participation, reification and the negotiation of meaning.

As participation relates to the processes of taking part and to the relations with others that reflect this process, participation is viewed as profoundly social. Ariel is not just a claims processor while she works in the office. It is a constituent of her identity as she goes about her life. The kind of daily practices that Ariel engages in that help build her identity are actions, like claims processing which requires a specific way of looking at a claim. The ability to interpret a claim form reflects the relations that both the claim and Ariel have to particular practices. Her daily practices are made up of the following actions;

The rest of the claim goes fairly fast: enter the code for the diagnosis, for the contract type, skip the coordination section, indicate the assignment benefits. Remember to include two pattern paragraphs, which are prestored explanations you get the system to include with the check: one for the special deduction and one for the deductible, which the system has automatically taken into account (Wenger, 1998, p.23).

Wenger sees Ariel as a member of a community of practice embodies a long and diverse process of what he calls participation. The claim is viewed as an artefact of certain practices embodying a long and diverse process of what he calls reification. It is when these two practices of participation and reification converge in the act of processing the claim that the negotiation of meaning occurs.

As an occupation claims processing at Alinsu is very much focused on procedures, on how to follow them, and on how to use such artifacts as forms, worksheets, computer screens, and manuals. Claims processors are not the designers of the rules and forms they use, yet they must absorb them into their practice. In an institutional environment such as claims processing, a very large portion of the reification involved in work practices comes from outside the communities of workers. This reification must be re-appropriated into a local process in order to become meaningful. Their character as reifications is not only in their form but also in the processes by which they are integrated into these practices. A medical claim, reifies in its form a complex web of conventions, agreements, expectations, commitments and obligations. This includes the right to decide if the claim is legitimate and duly filled out, together with the obligation to honour the claim if it is. The day to day practices of Ariel illustrate many of the reifications of a claim processor:

She uses a calculation sheet to figure out what the deduction is, looking up the standard charge for this type of office visit in a ring binder, entering the amount on her calculator to compute a reduction of 15% (Wenger, 1998, p.23)

Ariel goes about a standard daily claims practice using tools like calculators and calculation sheets to help her participate in the practice of claims processing and in so doing negotiates

meaning in her workplace. Reification shapes her experience. Having tools like calculators to perform the activity of calculating deductions changes the nature of the activity. The reification of claims processing through the types of forms and procedures described by Wenger in Alinsu, can detach work activities from other personal experiences of Ariel, to the point of giving her job a particular character.

Wenger recognises that the practices that we find meaning in are the practices in which we invest our identities in. They are socially performed, relational practices. Wenger sees participation as the process of taking part in the world and this participation is a source of identity. Reifications refers to how we impress our meanings onto the world and provides points of focus for the negotiation of identity. His ethnographic work on medical claims processing serves to highlight the interplay between participation and reification and their role in the negotiation of meaning and identity building in everyday social spaces. In the next section I will develop how participation extends development and therefore identity formation.

2.7.1 Development of identity through participation

Participation in practice with other people is a valued practice and the catalyst that drives development. This is a pivotal aspect to my definition of identity as these cultural, social and personal practices are the multi-layered sites for identity development. I will now elaborate on the work of Barbara Rogoff in extending this socio-cultural understanding of identity development. Rogoff's contribution to the debate on the importance of participation in the formation and development of identities (Rogoff, 1995). In her work "Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation and apprenticeship", Rogoff takes a socio-cultural approach and conceives of participation in communities as occurring across three interlinked and interdependent planes (Rogoff, 1995,

p.57). These are the personal, interpersonal and community processes. They in turn correspond to the developmental process of apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation.

I conceive of planes of focus not as separate or as hierarchical, but as simply involving different grains of focus with the whole sociocultural activity. To understand each requires the involvement of the others. Distinguishing them serves the function of clarifying the plane of focus that may be chosen for one or another discussion of processes in the whole activity, holding the other planes of focus in the background but not separated (Rogoff,1995, p.57).

Firstly, the metaphor of apprenticeship provides a model in the plane of community activity. It involves active individuals participating with others in culturally organised activity that has as part of its purpose the development of mature participation in the activity by less experienced people.

In apprenticeship newcomers to a community of practice advance their skill and understanding through participation with others in culturally organised activities (Bruner, 1983; Dewey,1916; Goody, 1989; John-Steiner, 1985; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, p.58).

The apprenticeship metaphor focuses our attention on the active roles of newcomers and others in arranging activities and support for developing participation, as well as the cultural and institutional practices and goals of the activities to which they contribute. Rogoff demonstrates the concept of apprenticeship learning through describing the work of cookie sales by the Girl Scouts of America. Cookie sales are a major annual fundraising effort, used to support the activities run by the organisation. Most scouts participate in the sales. Many have older sisters or mothers who participated when they were scouts. Rogoff's study involved working with two troops of 10 and 11 year old scouts in Salt lake City,Utah. They observed and participated in the collective activity of planning cookie sales and delivery which were laid down by the Girl Scout organisation. Deadlines and organisational supports are provided to the girls.

The scouts take orders on a glossy order form provided by the cookie company, and delivery cookies a month later, according to dates set by the regional administration. The cookie order form is colour coded in a kind of way that facilitates keeping track of the different kinds of cookie (Rogoff, 1995, p.60).

There is clear evidence of apprenticeship and the community plane of development in action.

Girl Scout cookie sales are described in terms of institutional organisation and evolution of community practices. It must be noted that these could not be described without reference to the contributions and development of individual girls and their companions in the shared endeavour. Whilst the community plane is foregrounded, the individual and interpersonal planes are in the background.

This metaphor is very strong as it supports the mutual embeddedness of the individual and the socio-cultural world. The institutional structure is important as is the cultural technologies of intellectual activity. Endeavours involve purpose, cultural constraints, resources, values relating to what means are appropriate for reaching goals and cultural tools such as maps, pencils and linguistic and mathematical systems.

Rogoff's concept of guided participation is the term used to relate to the interpersonal plane of sociocultural analysis. It stresses the mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and co-ordinating their involvement.

It is made up of the events of everyday life as individuals engage with others and with materials and arrangements collaboratively managed by themselves and others (Rogoff, 1995, p.61).

This participation requires engagement in some aspect of the meaning of shared endeavours.

It is not necessarily symmetrical or joint action. A person who is actively observing and following the decisions made by another is participating whether or not they contribute to the decisions as they are made. It refers to the processes of involvement between individuals, be they conversations, interactions or joint participations, as they go about the process of apprenticeship. It is the social or interpersonal plane which stresses the mutual involvement

of individuals and their social partners. Rogoff develops the Girl Scouts cookie sales illustration to highlight the aspects pertaining to interpersonal development. Attention is focused on the arrangements between people, including the availability of particular resources and constraints, as well as their close and complex interpersonal involvements. The cookies are usually sold and delivered with a partner who is another scout, a sibling, or a parent. Usually the management of the money is handled by a parent in collaboration with the scout. Guided participation included some arrangements and interactions that were meant to instruct, like training organised by the national organisation and some that were simply available in the format of order forms. The girls, as well as their social partners, were active in borrowing or developing one or another approach and making use of the resources available, as well as in negotiating a balance of responsibility for shared efforts. The Girls Scouts activity illustrates the interpersonal plane of shared involvement and arrangements within cultural activity, whilst recognising the institutional and individual planes of analysis. Their interactions are peppered by moments of deliberate instruction and casual conversations like those that take place between teacher and pupil. In the research site newcomer pupils and staff are active in their attempts to make sense of activities and may be primarily responsible for putting themselves in a position to participate.

Communication and co-ordination with other members of the community stretch the understanding of all participants as they seek a common ground of understanding in order to proceed with the activities at hand. Attention to the arrangements between people, including the availability of particular resources and constraints as well as their close and complex interpersonal involvement. (Rogoff, 1995, p.61)

Guided participation includes some arrangements and interactions that are meant to instruct, like teacher training on the new VSWare system, and some that are simply available like the bank of teacher subject resources on the computer system- teacher data. It can also include arrangements and interactions that do not have the intent of instruction or assistance like the

casual conversations between staff members over the morning break or student interactions at lunchtime in the canteen. The participants as well as their social partners are active in borrowing and developing one or another of these approaches and making use of them as well as in negotiating a balance of responsibility and shared efforts.

Rogoff's final plane, the concept of participatory appropriation refers to how individuals change through their involvement in one or another activity, in the process becoming prepared for their subsequent involvement in related activities.

I use the term Participatory Appropriation to refer to the process by which individuals transfer their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation (Rogoff, 1995, p.63)

In the Girls Scout cookie sales and delivery activity, Rogoff was able to observe changes in how the girls participated in a number of aspects of the activities. In the calculation of charges to customers they tracked how the girls took in greater responsibility over the course of the delivery. Their mothers often managed this aspect initially. The girls also became more familiar with the layout of the routes connecting their customers.

We observed (actually eavesdropped on) the girls learning to manage the complex planning involved in developing spatial routes with sufficient flexibility to be efficient within the interpersonal and material resources and constraints of the situation (Rogoff, 1995, p.69)

Rogoff also observed the girls sometimes participating with customers, following the structure provided by the scout organisation in the format of the order sheet. This order process was sometimes extended by the girls in ways that tied their efforts in the activity to practices in other institutions in their culture. The scout organisation talk-aloud calculations were extended by using Post-it notes to remember. This activity signals the cognitive development processes evident as the girls participated in this sociocultural activity. Through their participation they had developed in ways that Rogoff could see led to changing later participation.

Hence it is participation with other people that is the valued practice. It is this participation that is the vehicle that drives development. Rogoff views participation itself as the process of appropriation.

I use the term appropriation to refer to the change resulting from a person's own participation in an activity. Participation involves creative efforts to understand and contribute to social activity, which by its very nature involves bridging between several ways of understanding a situation (Rogoff, 1995, p.65)

The basic idea of participatory appropriation is that through participation people change and become capable of engaging later in similar activities. Participatory appropriation gets at the inter-relationship of the personal and the social. This emphasises that identity is not possessed by people but negotiated between people. Rogoff conceptualises the mutually constitutive nature of the agent, the activity and the world. She cautions against seeing the social world as external to the individual, saying a participant in an activity is a part of that activity and not separate from it. Hence the social environment that the individual is embedded in is very notable. It can limit or extend an individual's practices and their subsequent identity development.

Rogoff's work is helpful in illuminating how individuals, groups and communities transform as they together constitute and are constituted by socio-cultural activity. This is illustrated with reference to life in the art room (see appendix 5) as the personal, interpersonal and community planes are brought to light.

This aligns well with the work of Etienne Wenger outlined earlier. Wenger feels,

Meaning exists neither in us, nor in the world, but in the dynamic relation of living in the world (Wenger, 1991, p.54).

Practice and participation are ways in which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful. Wenger uses the term participation to describe the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises. He feels that participation in social communities shapes our

experience, and it also shapes those communities, the transformative potential goes both ways (Wenger, 1991, p.56). Participation is viewed as broader than the mere engagement in practice (Wenger, 1991, p.57). It goes beyond direct engagement in specific activities with specific people. It places the negotiation of meaning in the context of our forms of membership of various communities. It is a constituent of our identities. This concept of participation captures the profound social character of our experience of life. Hence both Rogoff and Wenger view the connectivity between the individual and their social environment as transformative. I will now probe into the work of Jean Lave as it further enhances the mutual constitutive nature of the individual and their world. I believe that Lave's work synthesises many of the theoretical concepts already discussed from Holland et al, Wenger and Rogoff and is the theoretical binding agent in my definition of identity unfolding in this chapter. Lave's work builds on the unfolding definition of identity as developing in the everyday flow of activity within specific social situations. The next section of this chapter will outline Lave's contribution to my research.

2.8 Identity unfolds in the everyday – Agent, Activity and World Enmesh

Participants are active as they strive to seek meaning and identity in a social world. They transform as they layer meaningful experiences and stories to form a construction of identity: a self. This identity is fluid in nature and changes depending on what we are doing, where we are and who we are with. Jean Lave's work – *Agent, Activity and World* unveils a simple but effective construct of identity as one that unfolds in the everyday (Lave, 1988). Lave uses the term agent to stand for our performed, shared and mediated identities. This is our socially constructed self. These identities are fluid and emergent and may be different in different communities of practice. Who we are played out in the context of who we are allowed to be

influences in every context the shared resources we can appropriate to participate in different practices (Hall et al, 2014, p.75). A teacher in a classroom can only teach if there are pupils there to engage with. These pupils will take notes, ask questions and interact with the teacher in classroom activities. As an agent, the teacher can only be successful in the practice of teaching when the shared agency, mediated and distributed within the group facilitates participation in practice.

For Lave the activity refers to the task that participants are involved in. This task forces members to engage in communities of practice. In a staffroom setting, teachers may be engaging in a variety of different activities in the same communal space. Some may be doing corrections, some working on computers, whilst others may be sharing a social catch up on the weekend activities. As each of these agents goes about their daily work practices, the particular task in question brings something unique to their participation and priorities: the importance of developing specific identities within their particular communities of practice (Hall et al, 2014, p.76).

Finally, Lave uses the concept of the world to signify how, when we act, we act as historically located individuals, creating and created by personal and shared histories of participation and reification. Hence the individual is in and of the world. The cultures they are immersed in are resources for their identity formation and development. Lave's concept of the agent, activity and world working together in unison to create an identity transforming experience through the medium of social interaction is a watershed concept in identity development thinking. I feel there is a close linkage of thought between Lave's concept and the poem – Among School children, by WB Yeats.

Among School Children
By William Butler Yeats

III

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil,
O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you a leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightened glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?
W.B Yeats (1928)

In this last stanza of the poem Yeats states that just as a chestnut tree is neither leaf blossom or trunk, but the sum total of all three, so also man is neither mind nor body nor soul but an untitled entity of all three. This thought process parallels with that of the mutually constitutive nature of Lave's agent, activity and world. Each is in and of the other. They are enmeshed, so tightly woven together that like the dancer and the dance they cannot be viewed as separate parts- the dancer cannot be separated from the dance. Harmony between the two is indispensable for self-fulfilment, for the bloom and beauty of the tree of life and the holistic development of an identity.

Crafting identities is a social process and becoming more knowledgeably skilled is an aspect of participation in social practice (Lave, 1996, p.157).

Lave's theoretical contribution is evidenced in her research on Vai and Gola Tailor's apprenticeship in Liberia, West Africa. This helped her conclude that the informal practices through which learning occurs in apprenticeship are very powerful, in that learning is a central facet of social practice (Lave, 1996, p.150). There were 250 masters and apprentices in the Tailors' Alley. They made mostly ready to wear trousers, a pair or two at a time, working at foot-treadle sewing machines, and using the profits of one day's sales to buy the materials to make the next few pairs of trousers. Many of the masters took on a new apprentice, every few years, so that co-apprentices would be differently situated with respect

to the ways in which they could participate in the ongoing life of the shop. Lave spent many hours in the tailor shops getting to know the tailors and apprentices and listening to the local gossip and observing the daily happenings. The apprenticeship model was viewed by Lave as a means to “construct identities in practice”. The tailors, as subjects, and the world with which they were engaged, mutually constituted each other. In becoming acquainted with the sequence of garments they were learning to make, tailors’ apprentices were learning as well the sequence and relations of informal and marginal of formal and socially important clothing, social categories and occasions. This led Lave to recognise the importance of the situated character of activity in the daily practices of people’s lives in the everyday habitual practices of learning a craft. Hence Lave’s research on the West African Tailor’s apprenticeship as a whole is an elegant illustration of social learning and of crafting identities in the moment-to-moment social spaces.

This concludes the theoretical concepts discussed in the chapter and again leads to the development of a definition of identity that sees identity unfolding through social interaction in everyday, moment-to-moment encounters. It sends echoes of the performed and negotiated nature of identity and how by becoming active participants in the practices of social communities, identities are constructed. In the next section of this chapter I will focus on the application of these theoretical concepts to my study and this will give key insights into how this literature review chapter is developing as a central element of this unfolding study

The teachers in this newly amalgamated school have to carve out new social relations. They must answer the changes in their social relations and material conditions if they are to grow their identities. They may indeed find a resonance between the old answers and the new ones, but this call for answering this new world must be responded to. Pupils must also answer the new social and material conditions of their new environments. The second and fifth year

pupils find themselves in newly formed classes since amalgamation. A whole new web of social relations is spun. The material conditions of this new state of the art second level school spawns a whole new range of possibilities for becoming. Coláiste Fionn's sports facilities are a good example of material conditions that provide possibilities for pupil identity development.

Social relations are spawned in figured worlds and this research concerns the lived worlds of a second level school and how people take form, building understandings of themselves as agents, pupils and teachers in these figured worlds. These understandings and identities are unstable, especially as they are introduced to the figured world and they continue to undergo development in concert with other participants in new spheres of activity. Their identities remain multiple, as their trajectories through figured worlds neither take one path nor remain in one cultural space – one figured world. Their identities constitute an enduring aspect of history-in-person and this historical layering of identity is a pivotal element brought by them to new activities and new figured worlds.

The concept of figured worlds helps us to understand how through social encounters participants position matter. People take form building an understanding of themselves as agents- the pupils and teachers in the figured worlds of Coláiste Fionn. All the participants are newcomers to the school, but there are also new newcomers in the guise of first year pupils and new teaching staff. Their identities are unstable, especially as they are introduced to the new figured worlds and continue to undergo development in concert with other participants in new spheres of activity. Their identities remain multiple, as people's trajectories through figured worlds neither take one path nor remain in one cultural space.

Figured worlds are formed and reformed in relation to the everyday activities and events that are happening in the cultural and social space. The old figured worlds of the pre-amalgamated schools may have to be abandoned by the participants as they seek out new figured worlds in this blank canvas. There are possibilities for etching out new realms of meaning. This research traces the production and reproduction of such figured worlds, and how they can be interpreted with reference to distillations of past experiences. The figured world of Business Studies has dominant concepts like debit and credit, whilst the figured world of Geography is alive with the practice of map reading. Pupil and teacher participation is essential if they are to become embodied in these figured worlds. I will track some of the figured worlds that have become salient in the lives of both pupil and teacher in Coláiste Fionn as well as the markers of identity that inhabit such worlds.

Figured worlds take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances, and artefacts (Holland et al, 2001 p.51).

The situated nature of identity in collectively formed, socially produced and culturally constructed activities takes place in what is called figured worlds (Holland et al, 2003, p.41). Some figured worlds participants may never enter because of their social position and rank, some we may deny to others, some we may miss by contingency, some we may learn fully (Holland et al, 2003, p.41). The first-year pupils are placed in set classes. They will form new communities of practice. They will form new friendships with lab partners in the science class and through seating plans in general subjects. New teaching staff will find themselves in contact with certain departmental staff members more than others due to their timetable. It will be easier to become members of certain figured worlds more than others.

My research will portray glimpses of the figured worlds prevalent for the participants of Coláiste Fionn. They will develop a sense of their relative social positions in a given social

context. They will develop views of themselves in relation to those around them. This will occur in day-to-day moment encounters as they converse with each other along the corridors, staffroom and social spaces of this school. These social encounters will afford participants the opportunities to perform a self, negotiate an identity in relationship with those around them. These social interactions are the building blocks for the thickening of identities. Identities are constructed and co-developed in this relational space. People have the power to adopt multiple identities depending on who they are with and what they are doing. This idea leads me to consider the concept of positional identities. As my research participants jointly create and participate in the everyday world of school life, through their participation in figured worlds, they position themselves relative to one another. This gives rise to the concept of positional identities and this gives them a sense of their social position in this world. As my research focuses on the unfolding of identity in the moment-to-moment it is important that I outline the whole notion of positional identity.

Teachers and pupils wrestle with each other as they try to cultivate and grow their identities in this new space. There are many voices and just like an orchestra these create a human cacophony of sound. The participants' identities and discourses are multiple and can be in tension. The teacher and pupil are forced to choose from those available. Hence, the space for agency and for authoring of a self. The participants will answer their world, the teacher and the pupil as they go about their day-to-day duties. They both have the power to act agentively on how to author their respective worlds. This is after all a new school and there is the space for all its participants to become active agents in socially charged activities. But how they do so is determined by the vocal perspective of the social world of Coláiste Fionn. The practices and how they participate will determine how they answer this world and hence the kind of people they become – how they become “made and unmade by each other”

(Lawler, 2008, p.149). In the next section of this chapter I will explore further how figured worlds are opened up to participants through mediational means.

Mediational means are the shaping resources for the acting and performing of the self and hence the carving tools of identities. This research will look at some of the mediational means that the actors in Coláiste Fionn use to act on and perform the self and in so doing fashion new identities. It may be the maps in the geography room or the basketball in the courts. These mediational means are tools available to the participants to bridge the gap between themselves and the social world of those around them. In the space of Colaiste Fionn, both pupil and teacher are authoring new worlds and in turn new selves. Different constructions of being are evolving along with novel, imagined worlds. Through the medium of everyday school life, alternative worlds, identities, cultural forms and senses of agency are co-developed. Play, through the various extra- curricular activities that take place in the PE hall and sports fields of the school, is a great source of social interaction. Play also occurs in the school chess club and lunchtime clubs that are organised. Hence new worlds are created and recreated in Coláiste Fionn through the medium of play. In these figured worlds there is a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued. These figured worlds become embodied over time through continual participation. My research will shine a light on some of these worlds and how the teacher and pupil actors form and reform these worlds in the practices of participants. This practice is of course social and given meaning and structure through the social and historical context that gives it meaning. The practice evolves in this new site and is both resilient and malleable. It is collective and relational in its social dimension. Finally, it involves the negotiation of meaning between the participants.

Having a tool to perform an activity changes the nature of that activity. Having to automate the student attendance records, reifies a view of that activity, but also changes how one goes about recording school attendance. In the preamalgamated school attendance was always done through the medium of pen and paper. This practice is outdated in Coláiste Fionn as teachers have to be trained in the new ways of doing. The computer is the means through which pupil attendance is recorded. Teachers have to receive training on the e-portal system of pupil attendance. The computer is the new tool that changes the activity for the participants. It is a reification that shapes the experience of roll taking. In a similar manner, pupils now have a locker to store their books and materials. This differs from their primary school experience of a nonlocker world. Pupils have to navigate the use of combination locks and organise themselves to access their lockers at the correct times. This physical storage area is also a space where social vibrations are felt. Year groups congregate around the locker areas before classes and there is much banter exchanged between participants. Hence, I view the locker as a key reification that contributes to the meaning making trade-offs of Coláiste Fionn.

The mission statement of Coláiste Fionn has been tirelessly etched out jointly by a committee of the teachers from the pre-amalgamated schools. This is designed to give life to this new space. Yet, as a reification, it may seem disconnected, frozen into a text that does not capture the richness of lived experience. I feel that it is the day-to-day social interactions that permeate the lived world of this school, and the opportunities this affords the participants to negotiate meaning in Coláiste Fionn that gives life to the wordy statement that serves as the school's mission statement. This aligns with Wenger's contention that the concept of reification suggests that forms can take a life of their own (Wenger, 1991, p.62). They gain a

degree of autonomy from the occasion and the purposes of their production. Their meaningfulness is always potentially expanded and potentially lost. Reification as a constituent of meaning is always incomplete, ongoing, potentially enriching and possibly misleading.

In their interplay, participation and reification are both distinct and complementary. The reification of the new school code of behaviour for Coláiste Fionn is just a form. It is empty without the participation of the students in the school. Conversely, the production of such a reification is crucial to the kind of negotiation that is necessary for them to act as students and to bring together the multiple perspectives, interests, and interpretations that participation entails.

Participation and reification cannot be considered in isolation: - they come as a pair. They form a unity in their duality, to understand one it is necessary to understand the other, they come about through each other, but they cannot replace each other (Wenger, 2008, p.62).

Each make up for the short comings of the other and Wenger argues that both of these concepts are necessary for the negotiation of meaning. It is this opportunity to participate in school life, the opportunity to learn and negotiate new identities that is fundamental to the creation of communities of practice in this new place. He also feels that in life we produce precisely the reifications we need in order to proceed with the practices in which we participate. A number of new reifications had to be jointly designed before the move to the new school. These included a number of policy documents relating to the school code of behaviour and admissions policy, to name but a few. These were prepared by the staffs of both pre-amalgamated schools in partnership with the relevant stakeholders. These new reifications were etched on the blank canvas of Coláiste Fionn and were necessary in order for the everyday practices of school life to unfold.

This aspect of Rogoff's work speaks to my research in that the participants are all newcomers to Coláiste Fionn and through the activities that they engage in they have the power to be transformed. They are different because of what they have said and done in this space and are capable of engaging differently with similar activities in the future. This may be true for the newcomer teacher to this place as well as being a newcomer to the teaching profession. Her experience in Coláiste Fionn may mould her into a different kind of teacher and on meeting similar teaching experiences at a later point in her career, she will be able to transform her understanding and responsibility for them. This may relate to her classroom management techniques or the challenging terrain of a new subject specification.

Jean Lave's work relates to my study in that both teacher and pupil are active participants as they strive to seek meaning and identity in the new social world of Coláiste Fionn. Teachers and pupils are agents who engage in activities in the world of school life. The situated nature of their activities in daily practices helps them craft their identities in everyday social spaces. These are the activities that allow them to act as historically located individuals, creating and created by their personal and shared histories of participation. The next section of this chapter will explore a socio-cultural analysis of the place of sport in education. This is a developing area and legitimises sport as a space for learning and identity building.

2.9 The place of Sport in Education

Sociocultural issues in Physical Education:

Physical education and other physical activity opportunities across the school setting can contribute to one's feelings about competence, activity, and bodies, which undoubtedly contribute to enduring life habits. PE can support young people's identity struggle, helping them develop a comfortable and confident physicality. Young people need a safe and supportive pedagogical space in which they are enabled to make sense of and speak their body experiences to disrupt the social structure that rigidly frames, traps, defines, and classifies their bodies. To take down the walls of discrimination that confine rather than empower young people's bodies, the integration of a sociocultural view into PE can create educational spaces that work to raise consciousness about body issues and thus, build counter-narratives to suppressive ways of seeing the body.

Teachers should consider both how content is taught as well as how they individually influence physical education content. When designing physical education curricula, teachers should work to match the needs and wants of the students with the cultural and structural needs of the local community in mind. By, enacting a diverse curriculum that includes a range of activity platforms, students are given the widest possible repertoire of activity background that will allow them the freedom to engage in activity as their life evolves through adulthood.

Student centeredness is the need to move the focus of learning from the teacher toward the students. It identifies students as key decision makers and argues for student centred curricula (Flory et al, 2014, p.45). The most prominent theme in their analysis was student - centeredness, which could have been described in other terms, choice was a big facet of this theme. The contributors felt that choice would lead to greater levels of engagement by girls.

When asked what sort of choices girls should be afforded, it was suggested that opportunity needs to be made available and the chance to make a connection with what they were doing are both important. In other words, choice –in terms of activity, clothing, and their form of engagement –would lead girls to value PE as a subject (Flory et al, 2014, p.45).

A willingness to make PE meaningful to children and not just to themselves, and without a desire to cultivate environments fit for learning. Gender still matters in PE (Scruton, 2013), not only for matters of inclusion and equity but because a gender focus in PE supports young people making sense of bodies and identities (Garrett, 2004).

Teaching and learning spaces that integrate a sociocultural perspective legitimate and value students' views and thus, facilitate the production of body knowledge around complex social justice issues of race, gender, and social class. Physical Education and School Sport is an integral part of the school curriculum in Ireland. Historically the “Healthy Body, Healthy Mind” philosophy has promoted the inclusion of Physical Education and School Sport alongside more cognitive school subjects. Physical Education is a socially constructed activity that forms one component of a wider physical culture that includes sport and health/physical activity.

In a national context, it is through policy documents such as school curricula, as well as the practice of physical education that the nature and purposes of physical education are determined. The physical education curricula in Ireland are underpinned by the principle of lifelong participation aiming at the primary level to “provide children with learning opportunities through the medium of movement” (Government of Ireland, 1999b, p.8). This is developed at the post-primary level by providing opportunities for personal, social and physical development through participation in physical activities (Government of Ireland, 2003). These

core aims reflect physical education thinking internationally where the World summit on Physical Education called on governments to recognise physical education's "intrinsic value and its distinctive role in physical, personal and social development, and in health promotion" (Magglingen Commitment for Physical Education, 2005, p.1). I will now outline a few empirical studies that I feel underline the place of Sport in education.

Empirical studies:

What young people say about physical activity: The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA). This study was undertaken by three Irish institutions, Dublin City University, University of Limerick and University College Cork. The study assessed participation in physical activity, physical education and sport (PAPES) among 10-18year olds in Ireland. The following themes ran across all three opportunities of physical education, sport and PA.

Being with friends

Boys and girls whether primary or post-primary, active or inactive, students enjoyed being with friends during physical education. Many inactive boys shared the same perceptions as their active peers, including their wish to spend time with friends during physical education. They indicated the fun involved in PA, that it prevented boredom, and lets you be with friends (Tannehill et al, 2015, p.453).

Experiencing fun

The two main reasons cited by boys and girls for participating in sport in the study were fun and competition. Enjoyment and pleasure were key for all youth in choosing to take part in PA. This finding links well with other studies from around the world (Jones & Cheetham,

2001; Lake, 2001b; O'Sullivan, 2002; Macdonald et al, 2005; Dyson, 2006; Smith & Parr (2007) participation in physical education is perceived by pupils as a break from the rest of school for non-serious, non-academic socialising that is about fun and enjoyment.

Opportunity to be outside

Whether primary or post-primary boys and girls, active or inactive, students enjoyed being released from what they perceived as school academic commitments/lessons. The other two themes explored were variety in activity content and time constraints.

Overall data revealed that these young people had a positive attitude to PA which did not diminish as they aged despite activity levels decreasing. Encouraging and providing opportunities for young people to choose active lifestyles should be an important concern for the relevant parties. Hence sport plays a significant place in education and the findings of this study echo those by numerous international scholars over the past two decades that also suggest that as young people participate in and enjoy PA experiences, they will develop PA habits and skills and will be more inclined to choose and maintain a physically active lifestyle (British Heart Foundation, 2000; Hallal, Victora, Azevedo, & Well, 2006; McKenzie, 2001; Twisk, 2001). I will now discuss a further Irish study that illuminates the significance of sport in education.

School Sport and Academic Achievement

The study, *School Sport and Academic Achievement*, investigated how participation in school sport influences the Leaving Certificate points score in an Irish Secondary School. In particular, the study investigated how the particular sport chosen by students participating in school sport during their Leaving Certificate years influences their Leaving Certificate

results. The Leaving Certificate scores and sports participation of 402 boys graduating from a secondary school in Ireland during 2008-2011 were recorded. The study concluded that promoting participation in school sport and providing access to a range of team and individual sports throughout the secondary school years may be a beneficial way to improve students' Leaving Certificate results.

Our study suggests that participating in extra-curricular school sport whilst studying for Leaving Certificate secondary school-leaver examinations can benefit academic achievement. Furthermore, our results suggest that participating in individual sports confers a further benefit to academic results because of the enhanced positive personality characteristics of conscientiousness and autonomy associated with these sports (Bradley et al, 2013, p.12).

This study illustrates the impact that school sports can have on academic achievement. Encouraging participation in school sport can help promote academic achievement as well as providing an opportunity to achieve health promoting physical activity. School sport programmes that offer a range of individual and team sports can enhance the benefits that both bring to academic achievement and personality development.

Purpose of PE

Finally, I will look at the purpose of PE and look at the findings from studies that reinforce its positive impact. "Lifelong participation" is accepted as a core purpose of physical education (Green, 2004; Kirk, 2005). The contribution of physical education to lifelong physical activity participation (Trudeau & Shephard, 2005) and the capacity of school physical education to prevent or stem the rising tide of obesity (Gard, 2004) have been keenly debated in physical education circles. Further studies that align with these contentions are, The National Association for Sport and Physical Education's study, 2011. Its research again points to the positive impacts of physical activity and physical education on "student attendance, participation and enthusiasm for academic subjects and motivation to learn, as well as reduced behaviour and discipline problems". In addition, it continues "numerous studies show

significant positive relationships between physical fitness and academic achievement, including improved performance on standardised tests” (NASPE, 2011). A final study that supports the place of sport in education is the *The Teenspace National Recreation Policy for Young People*, which consulted widely with Irish youth, reported enjoyment as a key motivator to participation, while lack of interest was a main reason for dropping out of sport and recreation (Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs 2007). Participation in sport has a huge role to play in the lives of young people. This was recognised recently when University College Cork announced a major sports initiative. UCC announced plans for its new sports park in Curraheen, as it launched a strategy for its 55 sports clubs. UCC director of sports Morgan Buckley said, “This ambitious strategy is dedicating to unlocking the power of sport and physical activity across all areas of participation, representation and achievement” (Evening Echo, 2019, p.2). UCC has one of the highest rates of student participation in sports clubs among Irish universities, with a combined membership of over 4000 students in sports clubs. Hence participation in sport is a valued practice and an opportunity for student identities to be lived in and through activity, and hence developed through social practice. The place of sport in education aligns with the sociocultural understanding of self and mind that places the individual within a community, as relational, shared, emergent, mediated and distributed by the sport world in which we live and those participants that we share it with. Sport is performed in the everyday, it is through participation in sporting practices that participants develop a sense of self. Sport plays a central role in identity making. Finally, I will consider some of the empirical studies that I feel illuminate the key theoretical concepts for this study.

2.10 Empirical studies- “To be part of the story”

Table 2B: Empirical studies

	Holland	Rogoff	Wenger	Lave
Theoretical concepts	Figured worlds	Personal Apprenticeship	Participation	Agent/ Activity/ World
	Positional Identities	Interpersonal Guided participation	Reification	
		Community Participatory Appropriation	The negotiation of meaning/Identity	
Empirical Studies	Children, Power and Schooling (Devine, 2003)	To be part of the story (Moj e, 2000)	Children, Power and Schooling (Devine, 2003)	To be part of the story (Moj e, 2000)
	<i>Leaving Middle Childhood and Moving into Teenhood (Hall, 2008)</i>		Literacies And Masculinities In the life Of a young Working class Boy (Hick’s, 2001)	

I will now examine empirical studies that exemplify how authors and researchers have used and extended the complex ideas discussed. These studies highlight how the literature is applied to the everyday social spaces where identity is occasioned.

The first of these empirical studies that I find insightful is Kathy Hall’s work – *Leaving middle childhood and moving into teen hood* (Hall, 2008). This study reveals the figured worlds that are made available and relevant to a teenage boy called Daniel. It illustrates the kind of figured worlds that gather Daniel up and allow him to negotiate his way from childhood to teen hood.

Hall's work, funded by the British Academy, illustrates how one boy Daniel transforms himself as he moves into adolescence (Hall, 2008). This work is of great relevance to my study as the participants in my research are also navigating from primary school to secondary school. This journey involves much change as they move from childhood to teen hood. The story of my research strives to capture this new life as it unfolds for newcomers to a new place. When Daniel is in primary school, he engages in a range of cultural pursuits that are personally meaningful to him. These range from pop music to football.

The pivotal media associated with the world which Daniel so desires include pop music, clothes, especially tracksuits and trainers, mobile phones, computers, computer games, TV programmes, football, and above all friends and now night clubs (Hall, 2008, p.12).

These are highly relevant to the type of self he strives to enact. He attends a rural primary school and has the same teacher for three years. He dislikes school and his teacher. He positions himself and is positioned by others as not being able and not successful in school.

For most of the period of this research Daniel was in primary school. He hated his teacher who has a reputation of being strict and rather traditional in her teaching approach. He spent much of his time in his final year in primary school sitting apart from others in the classroom as he was perceived by his teacher as a talker and a disruptive influence (Hall, 2008, p.12).

Daniel leaves childhood behind and moves into a version of teen-hood and adolescence which for him includes being cool and popular. School seemed to contribute little to his world or connect with his family, his community or the pop culture with which he identified. The salient identity of coolness and popularity gave him a perspective on the world that resulted in him tending to interpret events and others actions in particular ways (Hall, 2014, p. 92). Opportunity to learn and hence identity transformation is a key message in this story. In primary school teaching was very much the traditional didactic model. Classroom life was spent doing individual writing assignments, answering questions posed by the teacher, completing worksheets and studying the textbook. Daniel is often put sitting apart from his peers. He is viewed as having a problem due to talking too much.

His mother frequently affirms his dislike of school by admitting that she too hated it. They also talk about school subjects at home and she pointed out to me in his presence that she was always hopeless at maths and how Daniel is hopeless. School is not a place where Daniel can author himself. Primary school is a place where he was literally silenced (Hall, 2008, p.12).

Daniel would benefit from practices that would involve him more centrally in learning tasks. This would enhance his sense of belonging, engagement and his ability to author a learned self-identity. When he moved to secondary school this mismatch between his school experience and his lived experience was lessened. Daniel was able to renegotiate the tension that had previously existed between doing cool teenager and successful school learner. His secondary school afforded him new opportunities in terms of new peers, teachers, curricula and activities. All of these helped significantly to disrupt and challenge existing conceptions of him as a person and as learner. He was able to author a new self, and became agentive in his new environment.

Since moving into secondary school in September 2005 Daniel has tempered his dread of teachers, class work, and school subjects. In conversation, he has initiated the possibility of being successful in school, occasioned by his evaluation of his new school as cool insofar as: talk in class is allowed, some teachers don't object to note passing, school trips (to Alton Towers and Old Trafford this year) are exciting, discos are organised by the school at weekends, subjects are far more interesting than primary school, especially science and other subjects (Hall, 2008, p.15).

Clearly the wider social milieu that Daniel finds himself embedded in is a central part of his transformation and in the creation of a renewed identity. This story also illustrates how pupils can transform in the move from primary to secondary school if they are given the opportunity to participate. By the end of Daniel's first year in secondary school there is a hint of an emerging new identity, a turning point.

He transforms himself to go to the secondary school disco in the local town. Moreover, both his parents have a tradition themselves of dressing up, going out on week-end nights to meet friends (Hall, 2008, p.13).

When participants were not bounded by the absence of opportunities to participate in practice that would extend and enhance their human agency and therefore their identities by this opportunity to participate. This work illustrates how identity is occasioned in the everyday moment-by-moment encounters. Identities are performed and lived in the everyday (Lave, 1999). It is evident that the self that Daniel can negotiate is dependent on others around him. He is figured by the world (Holland and Lave, 2001; Holland et al, 1998) of the cool teenager and this world grants him the semblance of the cool teenager.

Daniel has found a salient identity by which he can negotiate his way out of childhood and into teen hood. In agentively evolving a particular identity and making it dominant and central to his display of self, he has sacrificed other ways to grow and other potentially liberating ways to live a life. For example, we saw how he will not commit to learning how to play a musical instrument, this activity being perceived to conflict with his current identity (Hall, 2008, p.15)

Identity or self is jointly constructed and can only be given legitimacy in interaction with others. The self is relational and dynamic. It is socially distributed. This paper illustrates the hard work that goes into identity making. Identity is granted but never guaranteed. In this study, Hall is interested in the figured worlds that are made relevant to Daniel and his friends and family as well as the markers of identity in those particular worlds. As my research looks at first year newcomers to Coláiste Fionn, they are walking in Daniel's footsteps. Certain identities can be salient and held out to them, whilst others can be held back or denied. The first years will strive like Daniel to author a self in this new space. They too are at the crossroads between childhood and teen hood. There will be identity making opportunities presented to them and this is central to a sociocultural understanding of learning and identity building. The extension of the pupil's agency will occur through the very practices that they participate in. These practices will build a bridge between the old and new selves. These practices are nested in new webs of social relations and participation patterns that spawn endless possibilities for creating and recreating identities anew. The people like teachers and

fellow pupils around them are the brokers and the participants act as pawns in the exchanges. Daniel adopted the salient identity of the cool teenager and this gave him a perspective on his world that resulted in him interpreting events and others' actions in a particular way. He grew through his membership of the figured world of the cool teenager. There was an opportunity cost involved in this as he had to deny other means of creating a self. The students in Coláiste Fionn will also have to make choices with regard to the figured worlds that they are drawn in by. Whatever identity they choose to adopt, this will be central to how they negotiate their way through secondary school and also how they grow as newcomers to Coláiste Fionn. Identities are meaningless in the absence of participation in activities. We must participate in activities, even vicariously, in order to take them up (Hall, 2008). The importance of participation as a source of self is developed in the work of Etienne Wenger. Hence this empirical study enacts the broad strokes of identity- making through illustrating key theoretical concepts like figured worlds and positional identities. The second empirical study that I will explore is the work of Dymphna Devine- *Children, power and schooling - How childhood is structured in the primary school*. This empirical study speaks to my research as it looks at children's experience of school and how this experience influences their emerging identities. The school environment is a highly social one in which both teachers' and pupils' identities are simultaneously challenged and affirmed. Power is exercised in everyday school life as teachers control the time and space of children in school. Positioning children as other in school and influencing how they think of themselves as persons with particular identities all happens in the everyday life of school.

In this study Devine concludes that children position themselves in relation to both their teachers and their fellow pupils. In their accounts of difference in status between themselves

and their teachers, children expressed a keen awareness of status hierarchies in the school, with themselves positioned at the bottom of this hierarchy (Devine, 2003, p.12).

As the school year unfolds, teachers and pupils come to share an understanding of what is and what is not tolerated in their interactions with one another. Negotiating is an important aspect of the exercise of power between teachers and pupils in the school. The children's participation in the world of childhood games and rituals frame much of their attitude toward and experience of school. This underlines the crucial role of play and participation in the making of identities.

In this study, children's identities are defined and redefined with reference to adult norms. It is Devine's belief that through their experience of schooling, children form identities as pupils. Her study paints a picture of identity as performed in the moment-to-moment social spaces. This is played out through listening to children's voiced experience of what life is like for them at school.

A central theme of this study is that identity is socially constructed and derived from the range of discourses to which the individual is exposed and consequently discourses of childhood will influence the perceptions children have of themselves. Children define themselves in terms of their relations not only with adults but also with peers, in terms of their gender, social class, ethnicity. As active agents they position themselves, defining their identities and shaping their behaviour according to their own experiences. Devine feels that school practices influence children's construction of themselves as children, in terms of their role and positioning as individuals in school. This positioning is an active process. Children reflect, react to accommodate such practices, incorporating them into their own sense of self. This illustrates the fluidity and non- bounded nature of identity. This empirical study is helpful in my argument that identity is occasioned in the everyday. It is performed and negotiated with other people and layered with the history of its participants.

The next empirical study that is useful in illustrating some of the theoretical concepts that form the backbone of my theoretical framework is that of Elizabeth Moje- *“To Be Part of the Story”: the literacy practices of Gangsta Adolescents*. Moje’s work illustrates how five gang connected youth see their literacy practices as meaning making, expressive and communicative tools. My research involves the construction of identity and how students take up a social position in their world. Moje illustrates the power and centrality of graffiti to who they are as people.

It is a way of conveying, constructing and maintaining identity, thought and power (Moje, 2000, p.651).

Hence student literacy gives a powerful lens into the student social world and space, identity construction and representation. The adolescents in the study connected to gangs used language, literacy and other discursive practices to make meaning for themselves, communicate with others and gain membership in the community. Because the gangs were so powerful in the youth culture of the school, these young people used gang-connected practices to negotiate their school lives. There is also a strong theme of communities of practice in that the adolescents are learning practices by apprenticing others in a community of practice and by practicing their different forms in various spaces (Moje, 2000, p.672). This links with the unfolding of identities in communities of practice which I discuss in chapter 4. Moje’s research hangs from a sociocultural thread, as the social and cultural lived worlds of the participants impact on the kind of people they are and how they are allowed to become—part of the story. I would also like to draw from Moje’s definition of identity. She envisions identity as follows:

the perspective on identity that I offer suggests that identity is not a stable, unitary construct; instead anyone person can construct many different identities, identities can conflict with one another, but are articulated to the subject positions that people construct or that are constructed for them (Moje, 2000, p.656).

Hence Moje view's identity as fluid. It is multiple in that people can embody many different identities and it is linked to the positionality of the participants. I find this perspective of identity advances my theoretical argument that identity is not fixed and involves other people.

The final empirical study that I have chosen for this section of the chapter is Deborah Hicks' work- *Literacies and Masculinities in the life of a young working-class boy*, which illuminate children's negotiation of cultural and textual spaces between home and school. Hicks constructs a narrative that details the complex particulars of values, feelings, and practices in a social context. The research centres around a young working - class boy named Jake. Jake had no difficulty negotiating his identity in Kindergarten, but due to the dissonances between family identities and school practices, he increasingly came to resent what school demanded of him in first and second grade. Because of the open-ended nature of many kindergarten social and academic practices, Jake was able to construct his own points of entry with school. He engaged with classroom practices that mirrored his modes of learning at home. These included roaming, moving freely, working for long periods at centres involving building vehicles or working with objects. This mirrored activities that Jake was observed engaging in at home.

Jake was nearly constantly in motion, sitting down only to perform a task, then moving right on to the next activity. His love for NASCAR racing and his emerging interest in joining his father in constructive jobs are things that could sustain him for long periods of time (Hicks, 2001, p.219)

In sharp contrast in school, he resisted activities involving two-dimensional text- reading, writing and drawing. His early reaction was one of disinterest and tuning out. There was a cultural dissonance between Jake's home life and that of school. When Hicks' visited his home, she experienced a different cultural space.

Relationships and activities within Jake's close and extended family are fluid and shifting; social spaces in his home are therefore typically buzzing with ongoing talk and activity (Hicks, 2001, p.218).

The research highlights Jake's difficulty in first and second grade as he moved between the social world of home and school. Jake did become a reader but with some degree of struggle amid the social boundaries of classroom reading and writing practices. In general, he became a struggling student. Jake's strong preference for the forms of being and knowing that he practiced at home interfaced with first and second grade expectations.

Jake was a young boy strongly immersed in the stories and practices that were lived by his father.

Jake also joined his father in a family passion for car racing and collecting small replica racing cars. In his parents' room was his father's extraordinary collection of miniature racing cars, each displayed with a picture of the car's driver. Hung in Jake's bedroom was an emerging collection of race car miniatures (Hicks, 2001, p.219).

Sustained interest in an activity, required that the task made sense to Jake. A task had to be something that needed to be done. Otherwise Jake would refer to it as plain "stupid". The research pinpoints Jake's struggle to align school reading practices with his life as a reader at home, including the gendered relationships and identities that shaped reading in his family life.

The research on Jake amplifies some key observations regarding identity which resonate for my study. There are different identities around home and school and these are bounded by social class and gender. Jake's sense of himself as a reader was bounded and constrained by his gender. The pervasive influence of social class cannot be escaped. This influence is constructed through interaction. Both social class and gender are big physical markers influencing what is made available. Gender is made- there is a way to be a boy. Hence Jake is positioned. There are also strong messages regarding the self and its performed nature.

The self is always performed and interactional and relational. The way one perceives what is relevant in a particular situation is due to our histories of participation. Jake's teachers did not take account of his history of participation and the social practices and relationships experienced at home were not brought to bear on his school work.

The above empirical studies highlight broad themes ranging from the shaping of figured worlds to the fashioning of identity in everyday social spaces. My empirical study is based in a newly amalgamated second-level Irish school and aims at gleaning insights into the social construction of identity in this context. It endeavours to shed light on issues like newcomer unfolding identity and identity development in communities of practice. I find it insightful to now examine a few more empirical studies that inform my research and illustrate its central concepts.

Identity is very much about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to “figure” who they are, through the “worlds” that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside these worlds. Figured worlds are intimately tied to this identity building. In sociocultural practice, these identities are moulded in process or activity. People “figure” who they are through the activities and in relation to the social types that populate these figured worlds and in social relationships with the people who perform these worlds. Hence, people develop new identities in figured worlds. Holland et al. highlight the importance of artefacts as the mediators of human identities and action. Artefacts provide the means to “evoke” figured worlds. Artefacts bring “developmental histories” of past activities to the present. In figured worlds people learn to ascribe meaning to artefacts such as objects, events, discourses, and to people as understood in relation to particular figured worlds. The importance and influence of figured worlds are also the foundation for Holland et al.'s other

three contexts for the production of personal and social identities: negotiations of positionality, space for authoring, and world making.

Empirical studies that exemplify the theoretical concept of figured worlds:

Robinson uses a figured world framework to articulate a theory of practice and learning in Dr. Gomez's classroom.

The Figured world of History Learning in a Social Studies Methods Classroom takes us into Dr. Gomez's classroom, a Chicana professor who uses inquiry and revisionist history as a method for teaching critical thinking skills to predominantly white female pre-service social studies teachers. In his research, Robinson highlights the importance of artefacts in mediating new meaning for the participants and the subsequent shifts in perspectives on history that these pre-service teachers underwent. His contribution implicitly highlights the possibility of crafting figured worlds that enable possibility.

Figured world of history in Dr. Gomez's history class.

The figured world of history learning in Dr. Gomez's classroom did not recognise "smartness" as memorisation. Her classroom did not privilege the traditional historical narrative. Rather, this world recognised and privileged revisionist history – narratives containing the voices of underrepresented and marginalised groups that are often taken out of history textbooks. Significance was assigned to student's ability to think and inquire about revisionist narratives in relationship to traditional historical accounts, their personal lives, and their future teaching lives. Within figured worlds, different characters are recognised and positions matter. In the figured world of classrooms, teachers are certainly recognised, wield vast power, and significantly shape their classroom worlds. Dr. Gomez's personal history was brought to her classroom because personal histories "are a pivotal element of the perspective that persons bring to the construal of new activities and even new figured worlds" (Holland et

al., 1998, p.65). during the first classroom discussion of the year, Dr. Gomez asked students to discuss history and literary texts they read and enjoyed during their schooling. As the discussion progressed one student asked Dr. Gomez about the books that she really related to in school. This discursive interaction represents a highly salient aspect of her personal history within the classroom world. Doing history in her classroom was more than rote learning and memorisation. Her experience as a history researcher trained her that history requires inquiry and the creation of narratives from traces of the past. To learn history students has to do history.

Artefacts and History Learning:

A powerful aspect of figured worlds is that artefacts not only create figured worlds, but that new artefacts are produced within figured worlds, and that these artefacts take on significant collective meaning, they mediate action. Figured worlds are not static, they develop and change as participants participate. Artefacts were produced in Dr.Gomez's classroom and these artefacts allowed students to figure themselves as history learners.

Thinking freely was developed in her classroom. It took time to develop the idea that thinking freely would be truly acceptable in the classroom. Time was spent discussing what it meant to think freely. The class read Rethinking Columbus: The next 500 years – a KWL activity ensued and afforded the opportunity for a student called Marelene to figure herself within the classroom as a “thinking” person. The KWL activity + activity became a staple in Dr. Gomez's classroom. It was either a precursor to, or the main pedagogical tool in more than 70% of her classes. Questions of shock became a participatory opening for students within small group, whole class, and one-on-one discussions to talk through ideas that they did not agree with, that they did not understand, or did not think the evidence supported the conclusions that the author made the development of artefacts were important to understanding the figured worlds framework because this development demonstrates how

figured worlds are produced through every action and event, and how these events become part of a collective history and shape future action within the world. The production of these artefacts also highlights the importance of improvisation in figured worlds. Dr. Gomez did not plan certain questions in the classroom, rather they occurred in the moment. In so doing, she created an artefact that radically shaped the development of this figured world. These artefacts created opening for students to participate in this world.

Robinson, provides strong evidence of the changing identities of students from interviews that displayed a contrast between their personal social histories with history learning in Dr.Gomez's classroom and their prior history learning in traditional social studies courses. Heather had little experience with history and little interest in learning history. She openly declared that she hated history and that she didn't understand it. In Dr. Gomez's classroom she developed an identity as a history learner. She started realising that history was important to understand. She realised that historical inquiry involved looking at all points of view and using good sources. Tom, was bored and turned off by history. He saw it as "dry and cardboardy". He transformed his perspective to viewing it as an opportunity to critically examine material. He attributes his change in perspective directly to his experiences in Dr. Gomez's classroom. Andrea's experience was a transformation from boring history to "questioning" and "thinking". She liked the class as she was able to "think" and this was manifest in the KWL + activities. Through inquiry it was "easier" to learn about revisionist history, something that other classes did not do. Marelene was different to the other students in that she was the only student that had completed her undergraduate degree in history. Marelenes identification as a history major, in conjunction with her overarching and singular goal to teach history, shaped her participation in Dr.Gomez's class in different ways to the other students interviewed. Marelene took a pragmatic stance towards history learning and did only what was necessary to complete class assignments. She felt it was more important

to complete class assignments that helped her develop her “teaching skill set”, rather than “reinforce historical skills” that she had been developing throughout her undergraduate studies. Marelene figured herself into Dr.Gomez’s classroom world as a teacher, not a history learner, and participated very little during discussions about historical content.

Hence, figured worlds are specific, produced locally through everyday activities and the artefacts that mediate meaning in those worlds. Although Marelene’s history classes and Dr. Gomez’s social studies methods class focused on disciplined inquiry, each did so in different ways, with different participants and for different reasons. The result was different practices, artefacts, meaning, and ultimately identities within these worlds. thinking freely, multiple voices, shock, KWL+ developed collective and individual meaning in Dr.Gomez’s classroom that was not present on Marelene’s history classrooms and afforded different identities as history learners.

The second empirical study that supports my theoretical concepts is, *Learner Identity amid Figured Worlds: Constructing (In)competence at an Urban High School*. Beth Rubin explores the figured world of learning at urban Oakcity High School, describing the learner identities that are available to students amid the practices, categories, discourses and interactions of their world. One student, Jose couldn’t remember anything he learnt in his 9th grade year. Rubin argues that the dominant classroom practices and discourses of the school produced a vision of learning that was so distant from meaning that most of what was presented to be learned was completely forgettable. Classroom practices consisted mainly of worksheets, quizzes and textbook-based questions. There was little attention to building conceptual understanding. This construction of learning as disconnected from meaning was evident in the students’ reflections on what they had learned during their 1st year of high

school. Monique said, “they ain’t teaching us nothing new for me to understand anything”. At Oakcity, students’ abilities were seen and treated as generally low, without much variation, by the adults around them. Interactions between teachers and students reinforced the definition of student as urban, unmotivated, of low ability and ignorant. Teachers made it clear that they were not hopeful that their students could learn nor were they personally invested in their success. In one classroom the students expressed a desire to do well in school, while their teacher humiliated students by reading their grades aloud.

Learner Identity at an Urban High School: “I used to be smart”

Students positioned themselves as smart in this figured world when diligent in completing assigned tasks. This limited definition of smartness, emerged from the very figured world that made such an ideal so difficult to reach. Classroom activities were frequently boring and meaningless. Interactions with teachers could be insulting and pejorative. Learning was distant from meaning, creativity, interest and engagement. Yet despite the difficulty of being smart in this setting, when students did not do well, they tended to blame themselves and each other for laziness. Amid the discourses, practices, interactions and categories of this figured world, students were not afforded the language to voice the disconnect between what they felt their friends to be capable of and what they were able to show. Students’ life goals revealed both their aspirations and the inadequacies of the school to help them reach their goals. Monique said, “I always wanted to be a lawyer, but my teacher, she said lawyers are liars”.

In summary in Oakfield High, students struggled with the restrictive definition of smartness, the figured world of learning in the school did not allow for a variety of ways to be a good student. Some offered critiques of this constructed identity, noting the repetitiveness of the

curriculum, “we did all this last year”, and its rote and uninteresting nature, “all we do is study the continents” students frequently used the word nothing to describe their school experiences indicating a sense of hopefulness.

Both of these studies contribute to heuristically understanding identity. They illustrate the strength of the sociocultural framework as participants try to participate and make sense of themselves and their participation. The studies are helpful in bringing to light the centrality of the theoretical concepts I use in my research study and the important role they play in the kind of people participants are allowed to become.

These studies, along with those already discussed above in the work of Hicks, Moje, Hall and Devine point to the currency and generative power of such concepts as identity, community of practice, agency and figured worlds. In sum these sociocultural concepts tend to privilege the meaning making of individuals as they relate to each other and to the perceived demands and expectations of their contexts. These studies also exemplify the complexity, relationality and dynamic nature of human development and learning.

2.11 Conclusion

The primary focus of this chapter was to outline a definition of identity for my research. A sociocultural perspective on identity formation is adopted with the work of Lev Vygotsky playing a central role in building up the definition of identity. I argue that identity formation takes place through the people around us, hence Vygotsky's view that mind is a socially and culturally mediated phenomenon is pivotal. I then draw upon the work of key authors who extend this central idea. These scholars are all part of the wider sociocultural approach.

The positioning perspective and figured world concept is used to illustrate how actors place themselves as social actors within cultural worlds. Holland's work integrates these concepts well into the sociocultural theoretical framework on identity formation. This is evidenced in the lived worlds of Daniel, Adam and Jake and central to the kinds of people they did or could become and the kinds of practices they engaged in.

These day-to-day practices always position others relative to one another (Holland et al (2001). Identity development occurs at the personal, interpersonal and community levels (Rogoff, 2003). Etienne Wenger, finds that it is through the social experience of living in the world that we engage in practices with other people and negotiate meaning and the kind of people we become (Wenger, 1991). The work of Jean Lave, sees identity as performed in the everyday as the agent, activity and world enmesh (Lave, 1988). In summary these key authors contribute significantly to the following definition of identity that I adopt for this research.

Identity is fluid and not possessed by people. It is negotiated in social spaces and always layered by its historical context. Identities are emergent and often performed in the figured worlds that are inhabited. Focusing on the socially constructed and culturally figured nature of identity formation, I argue that identity is performed in the everyday. It unfolds through social interaction. It is performed and negotiated with the people around us. It encompasses

their histories of participation and through the medium of participation in figured worlds we develop a view of ourselves in relation to those around us. It is through participation in practice that we develop a sense of self within the communities of practice that we participate in. Mind is a truly social and cultural phenomenon as our social interactions and use of cultural tools become our experiences for learning and identity formation in the everyday.

The next chapter will develop the above definition of identity with reference to story in narrative interaction. In brief it extends the sociocultural perspective to focus on the interaction, discourse and participation processes that emerge between people in and across social contexts. It continues the theme of identity being produced and embedded in social relationships and worked out in practice in people's everyday lives.

The concluding chapter in this literature review elaborates on the development of self within the communities people participate in. Identities are lived in communities of practice through the three dimensions of community membership outlined by Wenger (1998). Hence communities of practice learn as their participants engage in practice through mutual engagement and joint enterprise using a shared repertoire. Identities are emergent and performed rather than acquired as minds exist not in individual heads but in the shared social practices of a community.

Chapter 3: How is identity is negotiated through narrative?

Down Memory Lane

Lyrics

By Daniel O'Donnell And Isla Grant.

Intro.

*Let's walk down memory lane once more together
Let's talk about the way it was back then
And if we really tried, I know that you and I,
Will capture all those happy times again.*

*Once more lets sing the songs that made us happy
The songs that sometimes made us shed a tear
Let's stroll down memory lane and dream those dreams again,
Just close your eyes and turn back the years.*

[Chorus]

*Put your hand in mine and walk down memory lane
We'll sing the part we did back then and do it all again
You'll turn and say I love you, you'll tell me you are mine.
Let's walk down memory lane and turn back the hands of time.*

*It seems these days that time goes by so quickly,
And friends we make sometimes must go away
The laughter and the tears we shared for all those years,
Reminisce, and share them here today.*

*Once more again we'll talk about the good times,
And we'll visit places where we used to go,
Somewhere in our minds I know that we will find,
A reason to make our memories grow.*

*Put your hand in mine and walk down memory lane
We'll sing the part we did back then and do it all again
You'll turn and say I love you, you'll tell me you are mine.
Let's walk down memory lane and turn back the hands of time.*

Figure 3A: Memory Lane



We are both made and unmade by each other (Lawler, 2008, p.149).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter develops the sociocultural framework introduced in the previous chapter. I have firmly established that mind is a truly social and cultural phenomenon. I now extend this by taking a deeper look at the emergence of identity through narrative and interaction. Social interaction and cultural tools become our experience for identity formation in the everyday. Interaction, discourse and participation processes emerge between people in and across social contexts. This chapter journeys through the narratives that enable us to speak and perform identity, develop “self” projects and connect to others. Consequently, it continues the theme of identity being produced and embedded in social relationships and worked out in practice in people’s everyday lives.

I have chosen the work of Carol Rodgers and Katherine Scott (2008), in carving out my workable definition of identity. They look at contemporary conceptions of identity as sharing four basic assumptions. Firstly, that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear on its formation. Secondly, that identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emotions. Thirdly, that identity is shifting, unstable and multiple. Finally, that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. The Rogers and Scott framework is needed to capture how social interaction works as a tool for building identities in the everyday. The narrative aspect of this study is hung on these assumptions as illustrated by the clothes hanger (see appendix 6).

I will now explore the significance of each of these assumptions in the light of my unfolding definition of identity and their significance for this research.

3.2 Identity as contextual

Rodgers and Scott propose that identity is dependent upon the contexts in which we immerse ourselves. This holds true for the research participants and includes their families, former schools, educational institutions and the clubs and societies that they are members of.

Contexts shape our notions of who we perceive ourselves to be and how others perceive us, as much as we absorb them. It is this notion of absorbing and being absorbed by contexts that I am drawn toward in the light of this research. The newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn is a site where there is a burgeoning of social, cultural, political and historical contextual forces. I will firstly address the social context of Coláiste Fionn. Arriving into this new territory both teacher and pupil quickly become cocooned in webs of social relations. There are the old friendships of the former schools and this holds true for both teachers and pupils but there are now possibilities for forging new relationships. These friendships can unfold in the everyday for the pupils through the formation of new classes, their membership of the various school teams and just by virtue of sharing a locker or social space. The staff of Coláiste Fionn are presented with a myriad of opportunities to socially network with colleagues. These range from the Departmental Subject planning sessions, the cup of tea in the staffroom and staff nights out. The significance of the social context is seen in the opportunities that it affords to the participants to engage in meaning making practices and in so doing to alter their perceptions of the self and also how others perceive them. The human processes of thinking, acting, perceiving and meaning making are contingent on the social situation (Hall et al, 2014, p.60). The move to this new school is an ideal opportunity to remodel their identities and shape new selves.

Cultural context:

In engaging in practice with others, in living culturally, we negotiate ways of being in that culture, we produce, reproduce and transform the culture as we engage in it (Hall et al, 2014, p60).

As this research adopts a sociocultural perspective and views culture as emerging in practice, it is through the participants' enactment, through their practices that culture is born. Hence it is through what the participants do that we gain glimpses of the emergence of identities and the unfolding of a new culture. The sharing of culture through social interaction and participation in joint activity is how the participants are living culturally in this school (Hall et al, 2014, p.52). I do acknowledge the fact that participants draw on resources, practices, concepts from the old place and are now given the opportunity to marry these with the new cultural practices that they engage with as they move through the school day. The idea that culture is a fabric is introduced by Nasir (Nasir et al., 2008). I feel that this is significant as the threads of past and present cultural experiences of participants are now tightly woven together in Coláiste Fionn through the enactment of new practices. In a similar manner to the fabric, so too new identities are woven in this new space. Culture and context are viewed as inseparable at the individual, group and societal developmental levels. We can suggest that this view of culture gives prominence to the resources available to support participation and hence the resources present to support their learning and associated identity development. Culture is in an effervescent state of flux in Coláiste Fionn. It is a constant becoming and one of the key agents in the identity transformation of teacher and pupil.

3.2.1 Political Context- power woven into the social fabric of identities

Power derives from belonging as well as exercising control over what we belong to (Wenger, 1998, p.207).

Amalgamations would be very much part of the political and educational landscape.

Economically greater efficiencies accrue from larger entities as opposed to the two separate smaller schools. Coláiste Fionn was formed out of this mindset. These processes involve much political exchanges between stakeholders in the quest for the establishment of a new identity for Coláiste Fionn. There are many meetings, consultations and exchanges between

stakeholders as old identities have to be relinquished and new ones born. Big issues of power reside in matters like where trusteeship of this new school will reside. Micro-management issues like the ratifying of a new school crest, the adopting of a new school uniform are but a few of the decisions that have to be democratically sanctioned. These are power struggles of differing magnitudes but all manifest in forms of social power. Wenger encapsulates this in saying,

Identity is a locus of social selfhood and by the same token a locus of social power (Wenger, 1998, p.207).

In this way, it is viewed as the power to belong, to be and claim a place with the legitimacy of membership. On the other hand, there is an inherent vulnerability in identifying with the communities in this new school as it defines its members and has a hold on them. Hence the political context that gives rise to Coláiste Fionn has an impact on the formation of the identities of both teacher and pupil.

3.2.2 Historical Context -layers of participation making a life

The historical context of having two second level schools available for the pupil cohort and now having just one changed the landscape of teaching. There was not only a physical division of the buildings but also a conceptual division in how the community viewed the former educational institutions. One of the schools was a Vocational Education Committee School with a strong emphasis on the technical subjects whilst the other school was a Voluntary Secondary School with a strong academic focus. The opening of Coláiste Fionn effectively wiped this conceptual slate clean and paved the way for the dawning of a new educational era in this town. The majority of staff that moved to the new school had taught in the former pre-amalgamated schools and brought with them their history of participation. This will forge with the new histories of participation that will unfold in Coláiste Fionn. The teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn have their identities embedded in the historical context

that was and now have the opportunity to make new histories in the everyday Coláiste Fionn. This move to a new place may afford them the opportunity to become someone different- a shift in their identities. This can arise from a shift in perspective of one's sense of self or social position in the world. Hence the historical context impacts on the identity formation of participants and their moulding of selves.

Ray McDermott (2001) gives us a good account of how he perceives context. He is speaking in relation to Adam, a child with a learning disability, but I feel that McDermott's views apply to any contextual situation.

Context is not a fixed entity to Adam, for it shifts with the interactional winds. Each new second produces new possibilities along with severe constraints on what is possible. In this sense, context is not so much something into which someone is put, but an order of behaviour of which one is part (McDermott, 2001, p.67).

McDermott pinpoints that people cannot be separated from the contexts in which they emerge, their learning is distributed among those around us. The participants of Coláiste Fionn are also bounded by the possibilities that are held out to them, the opportunities afforded by their social spaces.

It probably makes more sense to talk about how learning acquires people more than it makes sense to talk about how people acquire learning. Individually we may spend our time trying to learn things, but this phenomenon pales before the fact that, however hard we try, we can only learn what is around to be learned. If a particular kind of learning is not made socially available to us, there will be no learning to do (McDermott, 2001, p.61).

I feel that McDermott's views on learning synthesise much of the importance of context in general and social context in particular in relation to how people learn and build identities in interactional environments. This is borne out in my research as the participants, both teacher and pupil are faced with new contexts which have the power to shape them into different people through the forces of the interactional winds that blow.

Consequently, context plays a pivotal role in the development of identity. It resonates the importance of the contexts we immerse ourselves in for the kind of people we become.

Studies such as McDermott's work on Adam underline how people become both absorbed and absorb the context that they are embedded in. Context is a variable in the ebbs and flows of daily life and in the moulding of emergent identities.

The assumption of Rogers and Scott that identity is formed in relationship with others and involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time will now be examined (Rogers & Scott, 2008). This assumption builds on the premise that human beings do not live in a social vacuum but are plunged into sociality which allows their identities to be constructed, contested and negotiated in social spaces.

3.3 Identity unfolds through narrative -*Just wanting to be part of the story*

Identity or selfhood as an ongoing project in self-awareness is well established (Bauman, 2000; Erikson, 1968; Giddens, 1991; Rodgers, 1961), as is the role that narrative can play in facilitating and signposting this process. The chronology of narrative connects events and experiences in ways that provide contingencies for future possibilities (Andrews, 2012; Goodson, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008). Similarly, others have highlighted the ways in which a narrative itself often becomes a site of new learning through the act of telling (Clandinin et al., 2006; Goodson, 2008; Turvey, 2012). Gill (2014) invokes Erikson's (1968) location of selfhood and identity development within a living web of experience and relationships where the development of identity is characterised as an effortful enterprise involving the interdependency between individual personal life histories and the social histories of place and space. This interaction between the personal and the social, Gill (2014, p.25), supports the "regeneration and development" of both individuals and their contexts in a

symbiotic exchange. This copper fastens the link between narrative knowledge and identity building.

The narrative approach, its concepts, terms and analytical tools, often involves accepting the assumption that human beings are story telling creatures, and that expressing one's life as experienced in narratives is a basic method of being in this world and making sense of it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2).

The interrelatedness of life histories and narratives is close and complementary.

We spend a phenomenal amount of our lives following stories: telling them; listening to them; reading them; watching them being acted out in the television screen or in films or on the stage. They are far and away one of the most popular features of an everyday existence (Booker, 2004)

Goodson argues that the confinement of narratives to small scale individual scripts constrains our capacity to develop links to the contextual background. He argues that the personal story is an individualising device if divorced from context. He also argues that our stories show the general forms, skeletons and ideologies we employ in structuring the way we tell our individual tales come from a wider culture (Goodson, 2018, p.6). The life history method has a long scholarly history. It was firstly conducted by anthropologists at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was pioneered by sociologists Thomas and Znaniecki in the 1920's in their study, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Their work established life history as a bonafide research device. When it is conducted successfully, the life history forces a confrontation not only with other people's subjective perceptions but also with our own.

Munro helps to establish the credibility of life history when he argues:

The current focus on acknowledging the subjective, multiple and partial nature of human experience has resulted in a revival of the life history methodology. What were previously criticisms of life history, its lack of representativeness and its subjective nature, are now its greatest strength (Munro, 1998, p.8)

The work of Dollard (1949), argues that life history offers a way of exploring the relationship between the culture, the social structure, and individual lives.

We must constantly keep in mind the situation both as defined by others and by the subject; such a history will not only define both versions but let us see clearly the pleasure of the formal situation and the force of the private definition of the situation (Dollard, 1949, p.32)

After reaching its peak in the 1930's it fell from grace and was largely abandoned by social scientists. In the 1970's there was a resurgence. Feminist researchers have been particularly vocal in their support for the approach, because of the way it could be used to give expression to, and in celebration of hidden or "silenced" lives (McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993).

Dan McAdams work on human storytelling is of great importance to the emerging work of narrative and life history. He looks at the interface between stories and personality and asserts that the personal narrative identity is the internalised and evolving story the person constructs to explain how he or she came to be the person he or she is becoming. Adams feels that constructing an identity, centrally involves composing an integrative story for life-past, present, and future (Goodson, 2018, p.37). He also feels that life stories spell out how a developing person understands his or her own development (Goodson, 2018, p.47). A person's narrative identity is the internalised and evolving story the person constructs to explain how he or she came to be the person that he or she is becoming (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Life stories spell out how a developing person understands their own development. Hence, life stories convey much about an individual's characteristic engagement of the social world (Goodson, 2018, p.47).

Goodson views life history studies and narratives not just as alternative ways of knowing but as different route to the process of knowing. The link between our narrative construction and our contextual understanding is central to understanding the process of coming to know

(Goodson, 2013). In this sense Goodson's work aligns with that of other socioculturalists like Lave, Rogoff and Wenger. While Goodson talks about the importance of life history, Wenger, for instance, talks about "trajectories" and previous experiences and they all talk about identities as plural, historical and multiple.

The work of Clandinin and Connelly (2001) views teacher knowledge as narratively constructed and as storied life compositions. I gain valuable insights from this into the narrative construction of identities in Coláiste Fionn.

These stories, these narratives of experience are both personal-reflecting a person's life history-and social-reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live. Keeping our eyes firmly on the question of teacher knowledge, we realised that knowledge was both formed and expressed in context (Connelly and Clandinin, 2001, p. 2).

They speak about the professional knowledge landscape metaphor in an attempt to capture the complexity of school context. They see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things. It is both an intellectual and moral landscape. They see it as being influenced by diverse people and events in different relationships. I am drawn to the fact that the professional knowledge landscape is composed of relationships among people and this is relevant to Coláiste Fionn as an educational institution filled with diverse teachers. This landscape is narratively constructed and has a history. To enter a professional knowledge landscape is to enter a place in the story. I feel that all teaching staff have their own narratively constructed place in the story of Coláiste Fionn. Some staff have navigated their way from the former pre-amalgamated school, whilst others are new newcomers to this space, place and time. These stories have a history which may span anything from one year to forty years teaching service. There is a lot of knowledge to be tapped by new newcomers from this well of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, Connelly, 2001, p.1). Clandinin and Connelly talk about an out-of-classroom place and an in-

classroom place as a means of describing the different types of personal practical knowledge that teachers hold. The out-of-classroom place relates to knowledge funnelled into the school system by policy makers. It is their vision of how things should be done. These are sacred stories. This contrasts with the in-classroom stories of practice. They feel that teachers' working lives are shaped by stories and these stories to live by compose teacher identity.

These stories are essentially secret ones. Furthermore, when these secret stories are told, they are, for the most part, told to other teachers in other secret places. When teachers move out of their classrooms onto the out-of-classroom place on the landscape, they often live and tell cover stories, stories in which they portray themselves as expert (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996, p.25).

Their linking of knowledge, context and identity is central to my study as teachers in Coláiste Fionn, immersed in a myriad of social, cultural, political and historical contexts, carve identities on this new landscape. Through the social exchanges between staff members in school and outside of school there is space for the telling of stories, the living them out in practice, receiving responses to them, retelling and reliving them. Hence these stories have the potential to be changed and re-authored just like the remoulding of the teller's identities in social interaction.

Clandinin and Connelly (2001), point to the fact that from a narrative point of view identities have histories.

They are narrative constructions which take shape as life unfolds and which may, as narrative constructions are wont to do, solidify into a fixed entity, an unchanging narrative construction, or they may continue to grow and change. They may even, indeed, almost certainly be multiple depending on the life situations in which one finds oneself (Connelly, Clandinin, 2001, p.6).

This aligns with the Rogers and Scott assumption that identities are shifting, unstable and multiple in their nature and Hall's work on Daniel when his identity projects similar traits.

The central message of Clandinin and Connelly's work is that identities are narratively constructed, shaped and reshaped, composed and recomposed. The research participants by

virtue of living and working in Coláiste Fionn will have the opportunity to write new life stories in this new landscape setting. Their identities, the stories they live by and their narrative identities as pupils and teachers have the power to be constructed, shaped and reshaped, composed and recomposed in social spaces.

3.3.3 Human Wormery – Layered histories of participation

I would like to draw a comparison between an ecological wormery and the idea that people can also wriggle their way through the layers of life's experience as they participate in practice. They layer their histories of participation and in so doing thicken their identities in social interaction. They graduate in a metaphorical sense as they navigate through life and their tales merge with the tales of others. This human wormery concept is illustrated (see appendix 7). This socially produced identity is explored in the next part of this chapter.

3.4 Socially produced identity-in relationship with others

People construct identities, however multiple and changing by locating themselves and being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories, experience is constituted through narratives, people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives (Somers and Gibson, 1994, p.38).

The above quote from Summers and Gibson (1994) amplifies many of the ideas presented in this chapter in relation to the narrative construction of identity. I will unpack this by drawing on the work of Steph Lawler (2008) who also considers how we might contemplate identities as being socially produced. Identity needs to be understood not as belonging within the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations (Lawler, 2008, p.8). Lawler's work is rich and insightful as regards exploring the narratives that enable both teacher and pupil to speak and perform identity. Again, Lawler sees the stories

and the narratives we tell as a way in which identities are made through narratives. There is much scope for the telling and retelling of stories in Coláiste Fionn. These stories may be stories about the old place or the new place. Teachers exchange them in the corridors and staffroom, whilst pupils exchange them in classrooms, locker areas and bus routes to school. For Lawler, identities are made up. They serve to make a story out of a life.

Identities can be seen as creatively produced through various raw materials available-notably, memories, understandings, experiences and interpretations (Lawler, 2008, p.11).

Teachers and pupils tell themselves and each other stories about their lives, and it is through these stories that they make sense of their new school world in Coláiste Fionn and their relationship between themselves and others. Lawler refers to the daily autobiographical work engaged in the everyday social spaces. The narratives produced are stories of how we come to be the way we are. Moore (1994) sees narrative as a strategy for placing us within a historically constituted world. This is certainly true given the rich historical heritage of the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn and historical context being one of Rogers and Scott's primary assumptions of identity formation. This idea that identity is a cluster of stories is highlighted by Anzaldua (1999), when identity is referred to as clusters of stories that we tell about ourselves and others tell about us. The fact that others tell stories about us emphasises that identities are always situated in relationships. Moje (2002) speaks about the performed or enacted way in which the clusters of stories are relayed. This gives us the sense that identities are lived and relational. In a similar manner, *Just wanting to be part of the story* - my research participants too live their identities in a sort of narrative that allows them to construct or represent identities and stories that allow them to belong. I will now explore another of the social processes that entails narrative, as participants trawl down memory lane and recall stories of the old days. These stories are rich stores of memories and anchors for meaning making and identity building.

3.5 Identity, narrative and memory socially entwined

I strongly believe that memory plays a pivotal role in the construction of identity. There is a strong connection between identity, narrative and memory as it is through the process of narrative that memories are told and retold in story. In narrating a story, the social actors draw on memories. Lawler sees these memories as social products as what we remember depends on the social context (Lawler, 2008, p.17). There are many memories to be recalled of the old school for both teacher and pupil in Coláiste Fionn. The years spent in the old place have spawned many stories of teaching, playing and laughter. The weaving of these stories about our past will help in the making of new lives. The play back and stop buttons are pressed many times as the emotions associated with each story are felt by the participants. These old stories mesh with the new stories and the happenings of this new world of Coláiste Fionn. Teachers and pupils constantly engage in recall, retelling and interpretation of their past so as to connect and make sense of their present. This is illustrated well with the image of pupils exchanging their small tales in everyday spaces in Coláiste Fionn (see appendix 8).

Storied Nature of Identity

Memory is like a video record. It does not need images, and images are never enough, moreover our memories shade and patch and combine and delete (Hacking, 1995, p.250).

Hacking (1995) builds a word picture of the significance of memories and storytelling by saying that in storytelling we weave stories about our past which we call memories. These tales that we tell of ourselves and to ourselves must mesh with other people's stories and that of the rest of the world. This meshing of stories and lives in Coláiste Fionn will build identities in social contexts. Hence, memories are a firm source of anchorage for both teacher and pupil in their new territory.

Memories are made up of places and people, which we creatively and jointly reconstruct with others in social interaction when we remember (Hall, 2014, p.146).

Memory is viewed as a sociocultural process as it only exists through its relation to what has been shared between individuals both in terms of their experiences, relationships, identities and cultures. Memories are brought to life through the social world of lived experience. Hence, memory is located in the everyday practices and culture of Coláiste Fionn. It is the social networks of relationships between teacher and pupil communities that enable memory to be used as a resource in identity building. It is my contention that memories are practices and it is the social process of their telling and retelling that produces meaningful social negotiation. This meaning making forms the core of lived experience.

People constantly produce and reproduce life stories on the basis of memories, interpreting the past through the lens of social information, and using this information to formulate present and future life stories. Narrative provides a means of conceptualising people in the context of history. If the past is always interpreted through the present, then, equally, this past informs the present (Lawler, 2008, p.19).

Hence, Lawler encapsulates the essence of how people build their life story, selves and identities through the medium of memory and narrative. The past is in the present and the present is in the past. The old days are enmeshed with the new days and the new days become enmeshed with the old days. The gentle kneading of past and present produces new social experiences between social actors and allows them to take root in a new place. Peoples identities are subtly performed and negotiated in this everyday interactional social space.

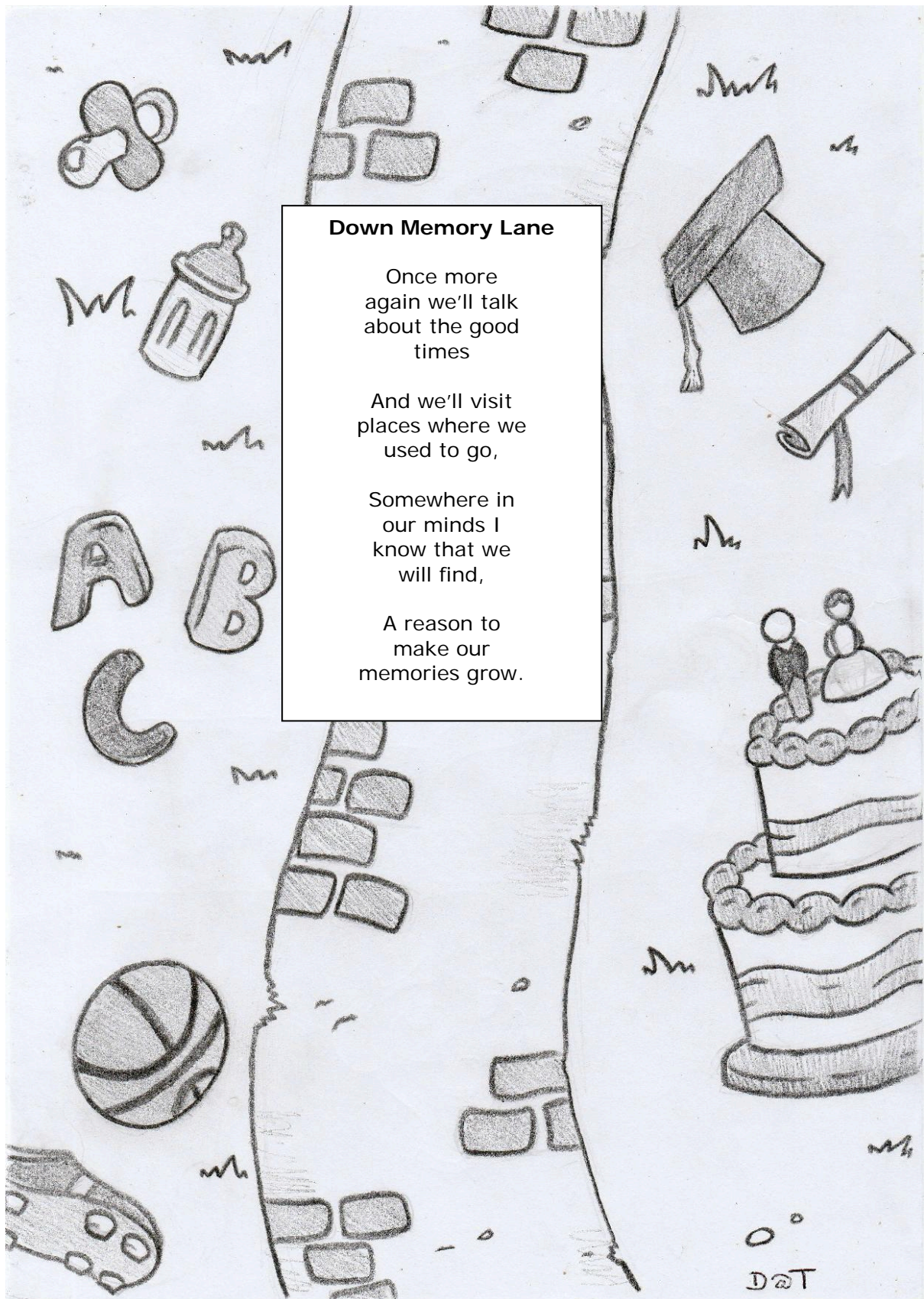
The rich histories of participation in the old schools are resources from which the pupils and teachers of Coláiste Fionn can identify who they are and their place in this new story that is Coláiste Fionn. Rodgers and Scott's (2008) assumption that identity is dependant and formed

within a historical context discussed earlier in this chapter supports this contention. Carloyn Steedman (1996) points to these historical resources as we try to identify with other people, other events and other times. History is a way of seeing and understanding our world and becomes a key resource to use when thinking about and constituting one's own life history. We make our life stories in particular ways, we marshal our memories in particular ways. We assemble sets of episodes to make an ongoing story and within this story we are able to say "this is me", "I am like this". I feel that Steedman's insights are helpful in that they point out how resourceful teacher's and pupil's histories of being is as they now carve out their life histories and identities anew. Steedman's ideas link well with Hall et al (2014), who speaks about the central role of place in people's shared memories. The old preamalgamation schools hold nuggets of memories for those who have passed through their doors. Place is seen as a reminder that memory exists in the social world. Places are imbued with meaning as they are part of our lived experiences. We have an embodied relationship with place and this reveals itself in the social process of remembrance (Hall, 2014, p.147). This contention is nested in the sociocultural perspective that it is through the forging of memory, people and place in social interaction that identities are performed. Through this same process teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn have the power to mould their life story, marshal their memories to create the story of who they are, as well as write their place into the big story that is Coláiste Fionn.

3.5.1 Memory as a form of negotiation of identity

An agentive use of memory allows us to recruit a meaning and a version of the past that complements our identities and tasks in the present, and through this mediated action we change who we are (Hall et al, 2014, p.154).

Identities are developed through our social interactions and relationships and this is certainly the case for the newly formed communities of both students and teachers in Coláiste Fionn. They will learn new ways to be in the participation and reification of their experiences. They will use these memory storyboards to reconstruct and renegotiate their newfound sense of community, identity and place on their terms. Staff on the Christmas night out may reminisce on what they did on previous Christmas nights out in the old school. In a similar fashion, pupils embarking on the school tour remember back to earlier times when they went on school trips. Memory becomes a productive and social learning space where different kinds of knowledge and understanding can be brought to bear on the new experiences of Coláiste Fionn. The cultural tools of the Christmas trees, tinsel and tour buses act as reifications in the negotiation of meaning. Seeing their experiences as connected allows the participants to understand their own participation and extend their identities. This shared practice of going back down memory lane will help the staff and students both in the present and in the future as they negotiate new meaning of shared practices.



Down Memory Lane

Once more
again we'll talk
about the good
times

And we'll visit
places where we
used to go,

Somewhere in
our minds I
know that we
will find,

A reason to
make our
memories grow.

Figure 3B: Down Memory Lane

The second last verse of the song Down Memory Lane is insightful for me in this research as it conjures up the practice of connecting to the old place. The talking about the old days gives rise to revisiting the old places and leads to the snow-balling of more memories. There is a great sense of social connection between the participants as they continue to walk, talk and reminisce. Hence identity is conceptualised as being socially produced and negotiated between people through the narrating of stories and walks down memory lane. Wenger (1998, p.88), brings to the fore how remembering and forgetting in practice stem from the interaction of participation and reification.

3.5.2 Remembering and forgetting the good old days

Distinct modes of existence in time, participation and reification act as distinct forms of memory and distinct forms of forgetting. As I have discussed in the previous chapter it is in their interplay that meaning is negotiated.

Reification:

Reification is a source of remembering and forgetting by producing forms that persist and change according to their own laws. The combination of rigidity and malleability characteristic of physical objects yields a memory of forms that allows our engagement in practice to leave enduring imprints in the world. Teachers and pupils connect to their histories through the reifications of the old school photos that pave the wall of Coláiste Fionn. The trophies presented at annual prize giving have made their way from the former old schools. These serve as imprints on this new world. The process of reification compels the school participants to renegotiate the meaning of these past products in the light of their present existence and force them into new relations with the world.

3.6 Everyday participation in social interaction

Wenger also views participation as a source of remembering and forgetting, not only through our memories but also through the fashioning of identities and through our need to reorganise ourselves in our past. Hence memory is interpreted in terms of an identity. Remembering and forgetting in practice stems from the interaction of participation and reification. When the school community gathers for the prestigious annual prize giving ceremony they are connected to their history through the various scholarships and awards that are passed down through the history of second level education in this town. It is through their participation that their identities are formed, inherited, rejected, interlocked and transformed through mutual engagement in practice from generation to generation (Wenger, 1998, p.89).

Finally, I will examine Rogers and Scott's fourth assumption that identity is shifting, unstable and multiple. In the previous chapter I outlined Hall's theoretical contribution to identity building through her work on Daniel (Hall, 2008). We see how Daniel's identity shifts as he navigates his way from childhood to teen hood. The research traces how he takes up new and relinquishes old identities. At the end of Daniel's first year in secondary school there is a hint of an emerging new identity, the relinquishing of or disruption to the old one where he disliked school. He now even considers that he might go to college. In the new surrounds of Coláiste Fionn, pupils have similar opportunities held out to them to participate in activities that have the power to shift their identities. Pupils may hold multiple identities at any given time from the academic to the sporty to the musical. These identities are grown in the everyday social happenings of school life. Identities are as unstable as the ebbs and flows of the tide, given the boundless opportunities that are now afforded to pupils in Coláiste Fionn. Elizabeth Moje and Sarah McCarthy's work - *Identity Matters* gives me valuable insights into how to view the social construction of identities. McCarthy draws on the work of

theorists like Sarup as she builds up her definition of identity. Sarup defined identity as a construction, a consequence of interaction between people, institutions and practices (Sarup, 1998, p.11). This research serves to trace exactly this in the context of Coláiste Fionn, as I endeavour to look at how both teacher and pupil construct new selves due to the social interactions of the communities that they are members of. It is difficult to measure how identity is a consequence of interactions and is relational, but by viewing the small changes in participants' practices and behaviours we can trace how identities are shaped by human interaction.

Identities draw on cultural models-discourses. It must be acknowledged that teachers draw upon the discourse of the teaching community as they navigate their way in the teaching profession. This aligns also with Rodgers and Scott's views that cultural context influences identity formation. Gee talks of discourse as ways of knowing, doing, believing, acting, reading and writing (Gee, 1996). These are tied to the cultural models by which people live. Gee refers to primary discourses, that also develop identities. This is helpful for Moje as she tries to firm up the following definition of identity.

The link between cultural models and identities is important. Identities, following such a perspective, are at least in part culturally situated, mediated and constructed. They are not solely an innate quality that one is born with. Identities are built within the social interactions one has within a particular discourse community (Moje, 2002, p.231).

Teachers in Coláiste Fionn will also draw on the cultural models and discourses of their communities as they enact the cultural scripts of their profession (Hall et al, 2012, p.104). These cultural scripts are the ways in which teacher beliefs, stories, scripts may be hidden, taken for-granted, embodied and embedded in our thinking and practices. The cultural scripts are the shaping tools that chip away into the making of new identities in this new place.

I feel that Brook's work on negotiating displacement synthesises many of the concepts that I have tried to bring together in this chapter as I endeavour to build my definition of identity. She feels that all of our interpretations of others are interpreted through veils of our own lived experiences (Brook, 2006, p.20). In arriving at this conclusion, Brook refers to the work of Harre and Van Langenhove on positioning and the social construction of selves. Our identities are not fixed, rather they are fluid and dynamic. Who we are – our multiple selves - are influenced by the contexts in which we live, act and interact. This idea again echoes that of Rogers and Scott (2008) on the significance of context. Positions in conversational encounters can impact and shape the development of lived story lines. Hence the casual conversation in the staffroom, school corridor or school bus can alter pupils' and teachers' place in the story that is unfolding for Coláiste Fionn. Identity is profoundly social and is continually interpreted and reinterpreted.

3.7 Conclusion:

This chapter developed the sociocultural framework introduced in the previous chapter. I extended the concept that mind is a truly social and cultural phenomenon. I did this by taking a deeper look at the emergence of identity through narrative and interaction. It firmly establishes how social interaction and cultural tools become our experience for identity formation in the everyday. Interaction, discourse and participation processes emerge between people in and across social contexts.

This social formation and development of identity was developed through the Rogers and Scott's (2008) framework regarding identity development. I outlined the conceptual argument

for how context is a net that gathers its participants and shapes their identities from a social, political, historic and cultural perspective.

The importance of narrative through the social exchanges in the school spaces allows stories to be the medium for remoulding the teller's identities in social interaction. The recalling of old stories in the form of memory helps participants to find their place in the present and dream about their future. This memory making is supported by the subtle interplay of participation and reification in the process of social negotiation. These narrative identities link self and other, past and present. Narrative identities are collective in that they are social and no narrative identity belongs to the teller alone, they also incorporate the narratives of others. Narratives and narrative identities plunge us into a sociality.

Subsequently, they highlight the ways in which lives and identities are embedded in relationships. Identities are moulded from the social and cultural resources that surround us. Through the forging of memory, people and place in social interaction identities are performed. Identity is emergent and occasioned in the everyday due to social interaction involving other people and their histories of participation. These stories told and retold will allow teacher and pupil to be made and unmade by each other (Lawler, 2008, p.149).

In the final chapter of this literature review, I will develop the theme of participants learning to be as they construct selves in social participation as members of communities of practice. Identities are lived in communities of practice through the three dimensions of community membership outlined by Wenger (1998). Hence communities of practice learn as their participants engage in practice through mutual engagement and joint enterprise using a shared repertoire. This chapter will simultaneously lay claim to the fact that identities are emergent

and performed rather than acquired, as minds exist not in individual heads but in the shared social practices of a community.

Chapter 4: How identity is negotiated in communities of practice?

Overtime, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes more sense to call these kinds of communities - *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998, p.45).

4.1 Introduction

Wenger (1998), presents a theory of learning that is rooted in the fact that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which people learn and construct identities in relation to their communities. His work focuses on the informal “communities of practice” that people form as they pursue shared enterprises over time. He builds a conceptual framework that allows me to look at learning and identity building as a process of social participation. This framework will form the backbone of this final literature chapter as I glean insight from how he views identity making in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world.

In this chapter, I develop further my socio-cultural perspective of identity as emergent, relational and unfolding through social practice. This has been established in chapter 2 and further developed in chapter 3 when I examined the development of identity through narrative and interaction.

Firstly, I introduce the concept of communities of practice and re-conceptualise them in relation to the hives of honey bees. I then examine how participants’ identities grow through engagement in practice through mutual engagement and joint enterprise using a shared repertoire.

Subsequently, I analyse how newcomers to a group learn to become full members through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This is the process of learning to become full members of their communities. This is developed by exploring how the

participation of participants evolves in trajectories, boundary and peripheral relations and gives participants different perspectives on how their identities work. It reiterates the socio-cultural development of identity and the significance of participation in practice for the spawning of identities. This chapter firmly asserts that identity building is the development of self within the communities of practice that you participate in (Hall et al, 2014, p.37).

4.2 Communities of Practice – Social networking

One of the most pertinent aspects of Wenger's work for my research is his connection between identity and practice. The formation of a community of practice spawns from the negotiation of identities. The very engagement in practice gives us a certain experience of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participants. As identity is a layering of the events of participation and reification, these layers build upon each other to produce our identities.

Identities are lived in communities of practice through the three dimensions of community membership outlined by Wenger (1998). The first of these is called mutual engagement. It is through this process that teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn engage in action with other teachers and pupils of the community. They develop certain expectations of how to interact, treat each other and work together. The second dimension is the pursuit of a joint enterprise. Teachers and pupils invest themselves in an enterprise. This accountability to an enterprise gives them a perspective on their new world and translates into an identity. The final dimension of practice that Wenger presents is the shared repertoire that exists between members of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, pp.73-85).

The sustained engagement in practice yields an ability to interpret and make use of the resources that facilitate the negotiation of meaning. Hence communities of practice learn as

their participants engage in practice through mutual engagement and a joint enterprise using a shared repertoire. I will gradually develop each of these dimensions of practice later in this chapter and relay how each of them impacted on my emerging research.

Communities of practice are everywhere, and everybody belongs to communities of practice. At home, at work, at school and in our past-times we all belong to different communities of practice. This is the same for the teachers and pupils of Coláiste Fionn who are all family members who struggle to establish their own practices and means of survival and they all have their own histories and stories of being. They negotiate a means of survival and navigation through the various strife's and issues that may arise. In the work situation teachers organise their daily duties with their colleagues to get their job done. They create daily practices to ensure that their work is carried out to the best of their abilities. They may be working for the larger institution of the Educational and Training Board but on a day-to-day basis they colonise much smaller communities of practice. Pupils populate this newly amalgamated building. This is a new space for all pupils but especially the incoming first years. They quickly become members of communities of practice ranging from their base classes to their option subject classes to the various extracurricular activities they engage in. Communities of practice soon become an integral part of their lives as they develop shared ways of pursuing their common interest. The learning and in turn identity building that becomes most personally transformative involves membership of communities of practice that exist in Coláiste Fionn.

I would now like to re-conceptualise Wenger's concept of communities of practice (1998) by drawing a comparison between the hives of communities of practice that populate Coláiste Fionn and the activities engaged in by bee hives. These hives of communities of practice that hum in Coláiste Fionn consist of subject departments, school administration, school completion programme to name but a few (see appendix 9).

4.2.1 Social humming in Communities of Practice

I will now elaborate on my comparison between bee hives and communities of practice.

Communities of practice are hives of activities as participants engage in practice through mutual engagement and joint enterprise using a shared repertoire. Communities of practice have colonised this newly amalgamated school - Coláiste Fionn. They have enabled their participants to transform their identities and through participation in the practices of the community to bridge their lives with that of school. The communities of practice of Coláiste Fionn are homes for teacher and pupil identity and in fluid-like fashion undergo metamorphosis. Their identities are emergent and performed through the honeycombs of relationships formed between community members as they socially interact. Likewise honey bees are social insects that live in colonies. Honey bee colonies consist of a single queen, hundreds of male drones and 20,000 to 80,000 female worker bees. Each honey bee colony also consists of developing eggs, larvae and pupae. There are always powerful members of communities and Queens are extremely powerful within their societies, but they also need the assistance of other community members as they cannot establish new colonies without the help of drones and workers, who provide fertilization, food and wax to construct the hive. The mutual engagement of the bees as they engage in actions whose meanings they negotiate with each other is what defines this community (Wenger, 1998, p.73). The inclusion of the bees, like the inclusion of teacher and pupil in their communities, is a critical aspect that enables their engagement. In a similar manner to the teachers' and pupils' identities undergoing metamorphosis in Coláiste Fionn, all members of a honey bee colony undergo complete metamorphosis, passing through the egg, larval and pupal stages before becoming adults. The bees like the teachers and pupils work together, see each other every day, make exchanges and directly influence each other's understanding as a matter of routine. They all develop shared ways of doing things in their communities of practice. They develop a view of

themselves in relation to each other in this social context. Each participant finds a unique place and gains a unique identity. This can be seen in the role and function of each community member in the bee hive. Honey bee larvae are legless grubs that eat honey, nectar or pollen. Larvae shed their skin and molt several times before they enter the pupal stage. After another molt, these pupae will emerge as adult honey bees and begin to perform specialized tasks for the colony. Queens are the only members of a colony able to lay fertilized eggs. An egg-laying queen is important in establishing a strong honey bee colony, and is capable of producing up to 2,000 eggs within a single day. Workers are essential members of honey bee colonies. They forage for pollen and nectar, tend to queens and drones, feed larvae, ventilate the hive, defend the nest and perform other tasks to preserve the survival of the colony. Drones, or male honey bees, have only one task: to fertilize new queens. The members of this bee community learn a way to negotiate a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p.81). The engagement in this joint enterprise gives rise to relations of mutual accountability between the bee hive members. The drones, queens and workers all know what is important and not, what to do and what not to do. Teachers and pupils soon learn the rules of the game as they navigate their new terrain in Coláiste Fionn. They too understand that making their work life bearable in Coláiste Fionn is part of their joint enterprise. Honey bee swarming is a natural part of a developing colony. Honey bees swarm as a result of overcrowding within a hive. A honey bee swarm may contain hundreds or thousands of worker bees and a single queen. Swarming honey bees fly temporarily, and then cluster on shrubs and tree branches. The clusters rest there for several hours to a few days, depending on weather conditions and the amount of time needed to search for a new nesting site. When a scout honey bee locates a good location for the new colony, the cluster immediately flies to the new site. I would like to think of this as similar to the re-location of old community members of the pre-amalgamated school to this newfound site - Coláiste Fionn. This can

happen on a day to day basis in the communities of practice of Coláiste Fionn as a natural part of development. Community members may depart and join different communities of practice. A student may join the athletics squad and leave the tag rugby training for a break. There are many hives of communities of practice that colonise Coláiste Fionn ranging from the sporting and extra-curricular communities of practice to the administration staff. There are much hummings exchanged between the members in a similar manner to the queen, drones and workers. Over time a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p.83) develops between community members and this is their resource for the negotiation of meaning. The shared repertoire of the bee hive members collides with that of the shared repertoire of the members of the communities of practice of Coláiste Fionn. Their routines, tools, ways of doing things, and their actions are the means through which members are enabled to express their identities in a shared, dynamic and interactive sense.

Hence, I feel that my re-conceptualisation of Wenger's communities of practice (1998) through the metaphor of a beehive encapsulates the key dimensions of practice unveiled by him. It also echoes a view of identity as performed, emergent and relational. In the next section of this chapter, I will now explore in more detail this social aspect inherent in the three dimensions of practice.

4.3 Socio-cultural weaving - the concept of a social practice

I will now continue the socio-cultural argument that echoes how identities are developed through the practice that teachers have developed in order to be able to do their job and have a satisfying experience at work. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what is done (Wenger, 1998, p.47). Hence the teachers in Coláiste

Fionn engage in social practices that are both explicit and tacit. The language, tools, documents, well-defined roles of class tutor, year head, codified procedures of codes of behaviour and attendance make explicit practice. The more implicit, tacit practices of embodied understandings built up between community members from their old schools and well-tuned sensitivities are all unmistakable signs of membership in communities of practice. The experience of identity in practice is a way of being in the world of Coláiste Fionn. Identity in practice is lived socially by both teacher and pupil, because it is produced as a lived experience of participation in their communities of practice.

It is through practice that both teacher and pupil participate in their communities, negotiate meaning and transform their identities. Wenger identifies three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community. The first one he presents is mutual engagement. Practice does not exist in the abstract. It exists because people are engaged in the actions whose meaning they negotiate with one another. The history of teaching started long before this group of teachers gathered in Coláiste Fionn. Practice resides in a community of people and the relations of mutual engagement by which they can do whatever they do. Membership in a community of practice constitutes our identity, through the forms of competence it entails. These three dimensions of competence become dimensions of identity. That is what defines the community.

Whatever it takes to make mutual engagement possible is an essential component to practice. For teachers, coming into the staffroom is a key element of their practice. This allows teachers to exchange the small stuff as well as the bigger issues relating to their practice. Given the right context, connecting staff through the internal email system can suffice to enable the mutual engagement of staff in Coláiste Fionn. Being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a community of practice, just as engagement defines

belonging (Wenger, 1998, p.74). This may involve welcoming a new colleague and asking them to sit next to you at morning break. In order to be a full participant, it may be just as important to know and understand the latest gossip as it is to know and understand the latest Department Circular. Wenger stresses that the kind of coherence that transforms mutual engagement into a community of practice requires the work of “community maintenance”. The generosity of teachers in Coláiste Fionn, who unselfishly organise “Cake Parties” in the staffroom to mark milestone events like wedding or, imminent departures of colleagues contributes to the building of the community and to keeping it going. There is a medley of diverse participants in communities of practice. It is their mutual engagement in teaching in Coláiste Fionn that makes it happen. Each participant in the community of practice finds their unique place and gains a unique identity which becomes integrated and defined in the course of their engagement in practice.

Mutual engagement involves not only our competence but also the competence of others. It draws on what we do and what we know, as well as our ability to connect meaningfully to what we don’t do and what we don’t know (Wenger, 1998, p.76).

This acknowledges the resources of the collective as a fountain of knowledge for the shared practices of the community of practice. The teachers belonging to such a community of practice must be cognisant of the importance of giving and receiving help.

4.4 Mutual Relationships

Wenger asserts that mutual engagement creates relationships among people. This is illustrated in the exchanges between people (see appendix 10). When it is sustained it connects participants in ways that can become deeper. A community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships (Wenger, 1998, p.76). The practice of going down town for coffee by groups of teachers is a practice that serves to copper fasten mutual

relationships between community members. The shared practice connects members to each other and is evident in the second characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence in the negotiation of a joint enterprise.

4.5 Joint enterprise

Wenger outlines how the daily practices of participants involve their collectively negotiated response to what they understand to be their situation. This may be the school hurling team as they strive to win the match they are playing. Each player occupies a position on the pitch and they do their best individually to mark their opponent, as well as collectively to win the overall match. In a teaching sense, there are many opportunities for the mutual engagement of teachers in joint enterprises throughout the academic year. There are subject planning sessions during which department teachers meet up to devise yearly schemes of work for their subjects. The drafting of common departmental exam papers involves the mutual engagement of department staff. The enterprise of preparing the Christmas test is joint, not in the sense that every teacher in the Science Department believes the same thing or agrees with everything, but in the sense that it is communally negotiated. They find a way to carry out this task together. Their responses, similar or dissimilar, are interconnected because they are engaged together in this joint enterprise of making the science department happen in Coláiste Fionn. Wenger pinpoints that these joint enterprises are what he terms “Indigenous”. This reflects the fact that even though the community of practice operates in larger contexts - historical, social, cultural, institutional and the practice of a community is profoundly shaped by conditions outside its control, the day-to-day practices of a community are produced by its participants within the resources and constraints of their situation. Teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn carry out their daily practices with an inventiveness that is all theirs.

Because members produce a practice to deal with what they understand to be their enterprise, their practice as it unfolds belongs to their community in a fundamental sense (Wenger, 1998, p.80).

This tells us that members of communities of practice are autonomous in their responses to the conditions, resources, and demands that shape their practices. I can therefore propose that the teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn will also be inventive and resourceful in their mutual engagement in practice as it is their communities of practice that negotiate their enterprise. The members of each community of practice embrace a regime of mutual accountability. Wenger views this as the degree to which as a community and as an individual, members feel concerned or unconcerned by what they are doing and what is happening to them and around them (Wenger, 1998, p.81). Some aspects of accountability may be reified, like rules and policies in a teaching sense. But developing specialised sensitivities and refined perceptions are significant. That these become shared in a community of practice particularly to newcomers will allow participants to negotiate the appropriateness of what they do and to absorb and be absorbed by the culture of the practice. This ranges from classroom activities to the sports field as illustrated (see appendix 11).

Wenger's third characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence resides in the development of a shared repertoire. Over time the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning. As the research site is a newly amalgamated school, staff coming from two old schools, it could be expected that a shared repertoire already exists between certain staff members. This repertoire includes routines, ways of doing things, gestures and jokes that are produced or adopted in the course of existence. Wenger refers to a repertoire in the following manner,

It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members (Wenger, 1998, p.83).

The repertoire of the community of practice becomes a resource for the negotiation of meaning between its members. The shared repertoire of school life is illustrated (see appendix 12). The repertoire between the members of the school's hurling team is a resource that allows its members to bond with each other and participate through mutual engagement in the joint enterprise of winning matches and advancing in the league. New players gradually become acquainted with this repertoire and comfortable with its use. It is the means through which they hurl from newcomer to eventual old timer. In a similar way the seating arrangement in the staffroom may reflect the history of mutual engagement of both old school staffs. This can change as time elapses in Coláiste Fionn and both staff mingle in the negotiation of new meaning. This seating arrangement can be drawn upon as a resource in the production of this new meaning as new jokes are told, new routines unfold and staff express their identities anew.

Communities of practice give rise to indigenous practices and to transform the identities of those involved. It is a matter of sustaining enough mutual engagement in pursuing an enterprise together to share some significant learning and transform identities. Wenger views history as the combination of participation and reification intertwined over time (Wenger, 1998, p.87). They are viewed as dual modes of existence through time. They interact, but they exist through time in different realms.

Forms of participation and reification continually converge and diverge. In moments of negotiation of meaning, they come into contact and affect each other. They shape each other in such moments, but they are not bound to each other. They unfold in different media until they meet again in new moments of negotiation (Wenger, 1998, p.87).

Wenger embraces the notion that the world and our experience are in motion. They interact but they do not fuse. Overtime communities of practice become invested in participation and reification and participants become invested in what they do as well as in each other.

Our identities become anchored in each other and what we do together (Wenger, 1998, p.89).

Wenger's work on communities of practice and in particular his insights as regards the three dimensions of practice outlined is helpful for me in the formulation of the research questions for this study. I will examine how communities of practice serve to transform the identities of both teacher and pupil in the research site of Coláiste Fionn. This primary question is supported by evidence gathered pertaining to the three dimensions of practice as a source of coherence in any community of practice. I will look for evidence of the mutual engagement of teacher and pupil in the site. Secondly, I will consider how participants engage in the pursuit of a joint enterprise. Finally, I will probe into the shared repertoire exchanged in their negotiation of meaning and identity in the space. Hence the three dimensions of practice will assist me in my argument that communities of practice play a very vibrant role in my research site. As this research develops the dimensions will also play a role as an interpretive lens in the analysis of my research findings. The dimensions of practice will shed light on the convergence and divergence of participation and reification in the social spaces of Coláiste Fionn.

I will now take a look at what I regard as a key means through which newcomers come to become part of communities of practice. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), brings this to the fore. This is a critical aspect in my research study as newcomer pupils and teachers eagerly try to belong and become a part of new communities of practice.

4.6 Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29).

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation was developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and centres around how newcomers learn and become included in communities of practice. A newcomer to a community is akin to an apprentice and as such occupies a peripheral position. Through participation in the daily life and social interactions of the group, the person acquires cultural knowledge and becomes a more skilled and knowledgeable actor, and thus moves to a position of fuller participation. It is a very important concept for my research as I look at how newcomer teachers and pupils come to learn and transform their identities in co-participation in their communities of practice.

The production, transformation, and change in the identities of persons, knowledgeable skill in practice, and communities of practice are realised in the lived-in world of engagement in everyday activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.47)

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation provides a framework for learning as a dimension of social practice and the enmeshment of the individual, the world and their relations in it. It centres on the person-in-the-world becoming a full participant, as a member of a sociocultural community. The individual will learn by becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions and master new understandings. It may be the newcomer first year pupil who takes up a new extracurricular activity or learns a new subject. This learning in new communities of practice will allow the pupil to become a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by the relations spawned in social communities. These insights are helpful as I pursue the research question of how identity is negotiated and transformed in communities of practice. The teacher and pupil in Coláiste Fionn, through the umbrella of legitimate peripheral participation have the opportunity to

learn by becoming involved in new activities, performing new tasks and become new individuals. It aligns with the earlier work of Rogoff (1995), who also viewed the enmeshment of the individual and their social world. Wenger (1998) views peripherality as providing an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice. It can involve explanations and stories and observation. But to open up the practice, peripheral participation must provide access to all three dimensions of practice, to mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and to their negotiation of the enterprise, and to the repertoire in use. The newcomers are engaged and provided with a sense of how the community operates. These newcomers must be granted legitimacy as they are likely to come up short with regard to what the community regards as competent engagement. This legitimacy for newcomer teachers and first year pupils in Coláiste Fionn can for example take the form of being helpful organising the first - year school open evening. This action is enough for the community to see that imperfections are learning opportunities as members interact, do things together, negotiate new meanings and as old timers share their competence with newcomers (see appendix 13).

Lave and Wenger view identities, as long- term living relations between persons and their place of participation in communities. This view has a profound implication for my research as it is this living in nests of social relations that has the power to transform the teachers' and pupils' identities in Coláiste Fionn. When we look at the changing forms of participation and identity of pupil and teacher who engage in sustained participation in communities of practice, from entrance as a newcomer, through becoming old timer with respect to newcomers, to a point when these newcomers themselves become old-timers it is clear the field of relations between newcomers and old-timers is fertile ground for identity transformation, in the context of a changing shared practice.

4.6.1 Absorbing and being absorbed

Newcomer teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn, through the process of legitimate peripheral participation are provided with more than an “observational” lookout post. Their participation for example in the school basketball team and in the subject department planning sessions are ways of learning, of both absorbing and being absorbed in, – the “culture of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.95). Teaching and playing basketball for an academic year in Coláiste Fionn provides both teacher and pupil with the opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs. It will give them an opportunity to grow a “second skin”, another layer to thicken their identities. This legitimate position is enough for newcomers to glean insights into, “*how masters talk, walk and work*”, and this is helpful in enhancing their knowing of what are the rules of this game. It may involve the nuts and bolts of everyday teaching practice, from checking the post-box, to reading the notice board to doing the corrections. What teachers do in the moment-to-moment. The basketball player will observe the master demonstrating the skills of lay ups and dribbling. These are what basketball players do in the everyday. These training sessions and matches are the participation opportunities that facilitate the moulting of newcomer to eventual old timer.

I will now elaborate on some of the ways in which forms of participation and identity of both pupil and teacher transform as they engage in sustained participation in communities of practice.

4.7 Changing forms of participation and identity in communities of practice

Generational discontinuities:

There is no fixed membership in communities of practice: people move in and out all the time. Wenger (1998) urges that as long as membership changes progressively enough to

allow for sustained generational encounters, newcomers can be integrated into the community, engage in its practice, and then in their own way perpetuate it. The newly amalgamated school of Coláiste Fionn has a staff of varying years of service and with redeployment there are sea changes in staffing with the passing of each academic year. But practice can be shared across generational discontinuities because the community of practice is a site for the process of shared learning. Trainee teachers are coached by their subject departments for the time period they are on school placement. These new recruits learn to work alongside the old-timers. They may team teach alongside the old-timers, they share the same staffroom and park in the same car park. They quickly become part of the scene. The newcomer's challenge is to form enough relationships with busy old-timers so they can start to crawl their way into full participation.

4.7.1 A community of practice - field of possible trajectories

A community of practice represents a melting pot where the old timers and the new timers interact and fashion their identities through the encounter. The community of practice is a field of possible trajectories as the old timers offer living examples of possible trajectories open to newcomers as they narrate stories and participate in practice. The practice itself gives life to these stories and the possibility of mutual engagement offers a pathway to enter these stories through their own experience and in so doing become part of this story. Communities of practice become places of identity in Coláiste Fionn to the extent that they make trajectories possible, incorporating teachers' and pupils' pasts into its history, by letting what they have been, what they have done, and what they know contribute to the constitution of its practice and paving the way for its future.

As trajectories, our identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present (Wenger, 1998, p.155).

Wenger (1998, p.153), argues that identity in practice arises out of the interplay between participation and reification. It is a constant becoming. As we go through our day-to-day lives our identities go through a series of trajectories both within and across communities of practice. It is this idea of an identity going through metamorphosis and connecting past, present and future that interests me. There are various types of trajectories outlined by Wenger and I will now explain these as I deem them relevant to my research. Teachers and pupils that occupy peripheral trajectories may never access full participation, but it may lead to enough access to the community and its practices that contributes to the transforming of their identities. This may be the case for a trainee teacher on a 6 week placement block from a teacher training college. Newcomer teachers and pupils to Coláiste Fionn are on inbound trajectories. They join the teaching and pupil community and its practices with the prospect of becoming full participants in its practices. As this is a newly amalgamated school there is a sense that all teaching staff are newcomers to this space and all navigating on an inbound trajectory. As they occupy an inbound trajectory their identities are invested in their future participation, even though their present participation is peripheral. Insider trajectories also bring their own challenges for community members. This move to Coláiste Fionn has entailed the adopting of new events, new demands, new inventions, and new generations all creating occasions for renegotiating identities anew. Some trajectories find their value in spanning boundaries. Wenger refers to these as boundary trajectories. They link communities of practice yet, sustaining identities across boundaries poses a difficult challenge for members. Finally, some trajectories lead out of a community and they are called outbound trajectories. This maybe the leaving cert class as they embark on a new journey and sail off to third level or a specialised field. They will develop new relationships and find a different position with respect to their community. In a similar manner, a staff member taking retirement will have to negotiate new relationships in respect to the community they are

departing as well as forging new relationships outside of Coláiste Fionn. A sense of a trajectory is important for both teacher and pupil in Coláiste Fionn as it allows them to see what matters and what does not. The different trajectories give participants very different perspectives on their participation and identities at work. The newcomer teacher knows if they work hard for this academic year there is a chance that they will have their teaching contract renewed for next year or at the very least get a good reference. The first year pupil knows if they work hard at training sessions there is a good chance of being selected for the school basketball team. Each training session is an event on a trajectory that gives meaning to their engagement in practice in terms of an identity that they are slowly developing. I would now like to set forth a further means through which I feel that teachers and pupils change their form of participation and in so doing their identities through participation in communities.

I will outline how boundaries and peripheries woven together on the landscape of practice form gateways for participation in communities of practice.

4.7.2 Boundaries and peripheries - the gateways to communities of practice

Wenger refers to boundaries and peripheries as the “edges” of communities of practice, their points of contact with the rest of the world. He defines a boundary in the following manner:

Boundaries no matter how negotiable or unspoken-refer to discontinuities, to lines of distinction between inside and outside, membership and non-membership, inclusion and exclusion (Wenger, 1998, p.120).

In some case the boundary of a community of practice is reified with explicit markers of membership, such as titles. The degree to which these markers act as a boundary depends on their effect on participation. Coláiste Fionn’s boundaries may range from the titles of class tutor, year head and post holder positions. The school’s senior management team comprises

of A Postholders and they hold a weekly management meeting to discuss issues of school importance. This information is disseminated to the rest of the staff via email. Further-more the absence of any markers does not imply the absence or looseness of boundaries. The status of outsider can be reified in subtle and not so subtle ways, through barriers to participation without a reification of the boundary itself. There may be cliques in the staffroom that have been inherited from the pre-amalgamation old school days. There may be cliques in the school yard from primary school days. These cliques will serve to delineate who is inside the club and who is outside. Who is allowed play the game and who has to remain on the outside? The nuances of a subject department distinguish the inside from the outside. A newcomer teacher on school placement is allowed enter the community of practice with an openness that at times feels like full participation, but every so often there are elements of boundary that creep in to remind them they are an outsider. It could be a subject specific expression that they do not understand, a mistrusting look from an old-timer colleague, a reference to the past school days. Participants form close relationships and develop idiosyncratic ways of engaging with one another, which outsiders cannot easily enter. The subject departments of Coláiste Fionn have a detailed and complex understanding of their enterprise as they define it, which outsiders may not share. They have developed a repertoire for which outsiders miss shared references. The boundary is not only for outsiders, but it also keeps insiders in. Practice can also become a form of connection. Practice has the advantage of offering something to do together, some productive enterprise around which to negotiate diverging meanings and perspectives. Closely related to a boundary is the idea of a periphery. The idea is to offer people various forms of casual but legitimate access to a practice without subjecting them to the demands of full membership. The periphery of a practice is a region that is neither fully inside nor fully outside. Wenger defines a periphery in the following way:

Peripheries refer to the continuities, to areas of overlap and connections, to windows and meeting places, and to organised and casual possibilities for participation offered to outsiders or newcomers (Wenger, 1998, p.120).

The concept of a periphery is insightful as it highlights how practices can be guarded just as they can be made available. Newcomer teachers may or may not be facilitated to attend in-service courses. There may be a seniority ranking in the department as regards who can attend and hence practice is guarded. If the newcomer attends the in-service with the other department colleagues it can be an opportunity, where the practice is made available to newcomers. It can be a welcoming invitation, and act as an open door to how things are done around here. Peripherality can be a position where access to the practice is possible, but also a position where outsiders are kept from moving further inward. Wenger feels that this landscape of practice through weaving together boundaries and peripheries forms a complex texture of possibilities and impossibilities, gates and entries, participation and non-participation (Wenger, 1998, p.121). Communities of practice constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections and encounters.

We not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through practices we do not engage in. Our identities are constituted not only by what we are but also by what we are not. When we come in contact with other ways of being, what we are not can even become a large part of how we define ourselves. Through remaining mostly non-participants our encounters let us know just enough about their practices to gain a sense of what it is we are not. Non-participation is as much a source of identity as participation.

In a world complexly structured by interlocking communities of practice, we are constantly passing boundaries-catching, as we peek into foreign chambers, glimpses of other realities and meanings; touching, as we pass by outlandish arrangements, objects of distant values; learning, as we coordinate our actions across boundaries, to live with decisions we have not made (Wenger, 2008, p.165).

The newcomer teacher sits in the staffroom alongside the old-timer. She is present at the staff meetings and nights out. She may not participate in the conversation but she is absorbing the practice. For a novice, not to understand a conversation between old-timers becomes significant because this experience of non-participation is aligned with a trajectory of participation. It is the interaction of participation and non-participation that renders the experience consequential. For newcomers, non-participation is an opportunity for learning. Observation on corridors and in the staffroom: these are examples of peripheral experiences for newcomers. There are regions that are neither fully inside or fully outside the practice. Newcomers build identities as they move toward full participation in tasks with experienced colleagues supporting learners. Their confidence and teaching experience is enhanced by participating in the space. They slowly craft an identity for themselves as teachers. The experienced colleagues open up the practice from behind closed doors by involving the newcomers in joint activities. Both newcomer and old-timer identities emerge transformed by the social experience of living in this world. Their identities are occasioned in this everyday space. Social participation is the source of their identity metamorphosis.

4.8 Critique of Wenger

Although I draw heavily on Wenger's concepts to explore and understand practice in the particular amalgamated school in my study, it is important to acknowledge that his perspective on learning, especially his notion of community of practice, has been the subject of some criticism.

Probably his most significant critic is the Finnish activity theorist, Yrjö Engeström.

Engeström (2007) argues that Wenger's notion of community of practice in the workplace is limited because it doesn't give adequate attention to the histories of such communities. He suggests that his perspective 'glorifies a historically limited form of community as a general model for all times'. He argues that this limitation means that Wenger 'overlooks the history of oppression' that can be a feature of hierarchies in workplaces and that therefore his concept is conservative and largely accepting of the status quo that obtains between workers and their masters in organisations. Engeström is critical of both Lave and Wenger when they talk about moving from periphery to centre and by implication the notion of 'newcomers' and 'old timers' - a concept I find productive and helpful in my empirical study, as I demonstrate later. He says this idea is 'foundationally conservative' as it undermines the potential for novelty by workers rejecting and, in Engeström's term, 'expanding' a given activity or practice. He suggests that Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) do not locate their communities of practice in 'the history of real societies'.

While Engeström recognises that Wenger's emphasis on remembering and forgetting and on reification and participation attempts to address matters of history, how he does this is deemed to be too narrow and abstract. In similar vein, Andrew Cox (nd) in a critical essay of Wenger's community of practice says much of twenty-first century working conditions do not

lend themselves to sustained collective meaning-making but are instead fraught with fragmentation and a type of alienation which can be features of late capitalism. In this sense Cox is critical of Wenger's analysis of the realities of what he calls the 'powerful rationalising processes of capitalism'.

Writers such as Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) have also challenged Wenger's notion of community of practice on the grounds that it doesn't address matters of class and power and these authors challenge some of his thinking pertaining to learning strategies in formal and informal contexts. And in this regard a detailed review by Kontio (2015) argues that Wenger pays little attention to the political dynamics of learning.

In sum one must acknowledge the criticisms levelled against Wenger since over time they have gathered pace. While Wenger and his colleagues have sought to consider some of the criticisms in their more recent work (Wenger-Trayner E. and Wenger-Trayner, B. 2015 and Wenger-Trayner et al 2017) there would appear to be agreement that he doesn't go far enough and that the criticisms of his earlier work still apply to his more recent analyses (see Kontio, 2015). However, even his critics recognise the contribution to thinking about learning that Wenger has made and all pay tribute to the tremendous popularity and uptake of his work in the academic and professional communities.

While I am aware of the main weaknesses attributed to his perspective I, like so many others before me, believe his concepts have sufficient clarity, coherence and generative power to justify their application in my study. Thus, I deploy his concepts with the caveat that they are not without some limitations.

4.9 Conclusion

What we learn with the greatest investment is what enables participation in the communities with which we identify. We function best when the depth of our knowing is steeped in an identity of participation, that is, when we can contribute to shaping the communities that define us as knowers (Wenger, 1998, p.253).

In this chapter I continued to develop my socio-cultural argument that mind is a truly social and cultural phenomenon. I focused on illuminating how identities are negotiated within the communities of practice that participants inhabit.

I analysed Wenger's theoretical framework on communities of practice. It is through engagement in the three dimensions of practice that participants negotiate meaning and identities are formed through the subtle interweaving of participation and reification.

Membership in the communities of practice in Coláiste Fionn has the power to make a self for both teacher and pupil as their identities translate to a form of competence in their communities.

Communities of practice are the homes for identities and woven from the social fabric that they are couched in. Teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn are members of communities of practice which calls upon their mutual engagement in practice. They learn certain ways of engaging with other people. They learn how to interact, treat each other and work together. They become who they are by being able to play their part in the relations of engagement that constitute their community. They also become accountable to an enterprise.

Their identities manifest through this as, certain interpretations become prominent by virtue of participating in certain enterprises. This sustained engagement in practice allows the participants to interpret and use the repertoire of the practice to grow an identity through their personal histories of participation. Initially this participation may be peripheral (Lave & Wenger, 1991) for new members, but through their social experiences and activities within their communities they slowly develop an identity of membership within their communities.

Teachers and pupils of Coláiste Fionn function best in communities of practice when the depth of their knowing is steeped in an identity of participation and when they contribute to shaping their communities (Wenger, 1998, p.253).

Chapter 5: Research Design

5.1 Introduction

The paradigm determines how a problem is formulated and methodologically tackled (Hussen, 1988, p.18).

In my research I examined how a newly amalgamated secondary school setting impacts on the unfolding identities of both pupil and teacher. This research is paradigm guided in the sense that I believe in the constructivist view that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process and I should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those that live in it (Schwandt, 2000). Such a view provides me with an appropriate scaffolding for the interconnection of my chosen research methods of case study, thematic analysis and the methods of semi-structured interviewing, observation and diary analysis. The qualitative method of research is chosen for this study as I attempt to make sense of how this amalgamation impacts on the identities of those affected most by it. Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify qualitative research methods as the preferred methods for researchers working in the constructivist paradigm.

In this chapter, I give details of all the salient considerations as recommended by Mertens (2010): sample; measures; pilot testing; conducting surveys and interviews; data collection procedures and data analysis; ethical dilemmas; limitations of the study and timelines.

5.2 Guiding Questions and Hypothesis

Identity lies at the core of this research study and how it unfolds amidst the challenges of this newly amalgamated secondary school setting was a central aspect of the study. I was very interested in capturing the voiced experiences of both pupil and teacher in their new surroundings. To this end, I explored three main guiding themes as a lens into teacher and pupil identity.

Sport Identity:

1. How sport is used as a tool to negotiate identities in new spaces.

Narrative Identity:

2. How identities are made through narrative.

Communities of Practice:

3. How identity is negotiated in communities of practice.

5.3 Case Study

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p.23)

I choose this method compared to other methods as a key strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth a “case” within its “real-life” context. I wished to illuminate a particular situation, to get a close in-depth, first hand understanding of the unfolding identities of teacher and pupil in this newly amalgamated secondary school. The case study method was best applied as my research addressed this descriptive question and aimed to produce a first - hand understanding of people in a place. It is more flexible than other types of research and allowed me to discover and explore as the research developed. I was able to delve deep and use a variety of data sources to get a complete picture of the phenomenon. The data was collected in a natural setting and context, enabling me to understand individual and shared social meanings.

Yin (2003), bases his approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. My research is based on the constructivist paradigm and the social construction of reality.

According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Hence my research study is a good fit for a case study methodology.

A good case study design involved defining the case. I focused on the school- Coláiste Fionn as the unit of analysis, hence a holistic case was developed. I justified my choice of single case on the grounds that for this research the school site provided sufficient evidence. A key demand of this method was my skill and enterprise in pursuing an entire line of inquiry at the same time as data was being collected. When doing the case study, I had to do data collection and data analysis together. This, helped to "triangulate" and establish converging lines of evidence and make my findings as robust as possible, triangulation is when two or more independent sources all point to the same set of facts. This helped to confirm the validity of the process. Furthermore, it conveys an argument and an informing context as to how these details and facts interwove.

This qualitative case study is an approach to my research that facilitated exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensured that the issue was not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allowed for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.

good case studies benefit from having multiple sources of evidence

(Green et al, 2009, p.115)

I used multiple data sources which enhanced data credibility. I was able to collect and integrate qualitative data which facilitated reaching a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The data from these multiple sources were then converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually. Each data source was one piece of the “puzzle”, with each piece contributing to my overall understanding of the whole phenomenon.

5.3.1 Narrative approach to Case Study

This research study relied on the narrative approach to building the case study of Coláiste Fionn. Narrative case studies are a form of narrative inquiry based upon social constructionist ideas and practices. Viewed from this position stories of lived experience are co-constructed and negotiated between the teachers and pupils involved as a means of capturing complex, multi-layer and nuanced understanding of the work. Narrative and life history research often takes a qualitative approach to data collection using in-depth interviews. The process is collaborative and requires establishing trust and close relationships. The researcher often encourages a flow in the interview, with limited interrogation, to let the participants control the ordering and sequence of their stories and reduce but not obscure or suspend the issue of researcher power.

Throughout the research process, there was a high degree of trust and openness in the research relationship. High levels of ethical and critical engagement prevailed. There was reflexive engagement involving a dynamic process of interaction between the researcher and

the participants, enabling an ongoing conversation about experience whilst simultaneously living in the moment. The use of multiple data sources was employed as was the valuing of metaphor's in an effort to bring together layers of understandings about the person, their culture and how they have created change and moulded new identities. Narrative analysis treated the stories as knowledge and aimed at conveying a sense of depth, messiness, richness and texture, often by using the actual spoken words of participants. Hence, narrative knowledge was created and constructed through the stories of lived experience.

Goodson stresses that you cannot proceduralise narrative research approaches. This is because of the intensely “idiosyncratic personal dynamics” of the method. He says there is not a predestined way of proceeding in life history interviews or analyses. They are serendipitous, emergent and even opportunistic. The primary aim of life history scholars is to explore how individuals or groups who share specific characteristics subjectively experience, make sense of, and account for the things that happened to them (Goodson, 2018, p.8). Furthermore, there is the inimitableness and fullness of the experience. Schostak, argues that narrative methodologies have the potential to position research participants as experts in their own ways of seeing (Schostak, 2006, p.149). The researcher remains the go-between, mediating and representing that which they interpret to be the research participants “ways of seeing”. I endeavoured to do just this in my research study. I endeavoured to depict the fullness of lived experience of both teacher and pupil in this newly amalgamated secondary school.

5.4 Sample

The primary unit of analysis was the newly amalgamated school, and the participants for this research were drawn from the school. My research questions hinged around giving voice to the lived experiences of both the teachers and the pupils in this site and it is not within the remit in this study to conduct my research in any other amalgamation site. This newly amalgamated school caters for 670 secondary school students and has a teaching staff of 60 teachers. The approximate breakdown of students for the 2013/14 academic year was as follows:

First year – 125 students

Second year – 125 students

Third year- 120 students

Transition year – 48 students

Fifth year – 95 students

Sixth year – 130 students

5.4.1 Purposeful or theoretical sampling

As I was working within the constructivist paradigm, I selected my sample of teachers and pupils with the goal of identifying information-rich cases that allowed me study a case in-depth. I was also cognisant of Mertens' advice as regards sample size (Mertens, 2010, p. 332).

Purposeful random sampling:

As there were 60 teachers in the research site, I interviewed 5. Charmaz advises researchers to learn what 'constitutes excellence rather than adequacy in your field' and conduct as many interviews needed to achieve it (Charmaz, 2006, p.6). She also cautions us about the

following paradox: you may not know what you need to find out until you grapple with analysing your data. Most qualitative interview research is an emergent process of learning about and interpreting research participant views of their experience (Charmaz, 2006, p.21). I became acutely aware of this as I navigated through the data collection process.

I was also cognisant of the following factors in my sample selection in order for it to be truly representative of the population (Lasky, 2005, p.903).

1. Teachers from both former schools.
2. Gender balances.
3. Teachers from different career stages.
4. Teachers from different subject specialisations.
5. Teachers who have had breaks in service e.g. – Career, Maternity Leave.

Student sample:

I purposefully selected students to participate in focus group sessions. The students were selected from those that I was timetabled to teach and that I had built up a relationship with. The focus group sessions consisted of 10-12 students with a discussion of three or four major themes. The discussions were stimulated by cultural artefacts (Bartlett, 2007, p.60). The participants of the focus group from the first Leaving Certificate class were asked to bring a cultural artefact that represented their former schools. There were six or seven focus groups and they were helpful to get the opinions of 70 –80 students. I was cognisant of the following factors when selecting my sample:

1. Students from all year groups (1st -6th year).
2. 2012 Leaving Certs – the first year of amalgamation.

3. A gender- balance.

5.5 Measures

5.5.1 Constructivist measures

Constructivist: Dependability

As I was working within this paradigm change is expected. My research was always emergent and I had a duty to track this change and provide a publicly documentable record of the change process.

Constructivist: Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1989) identify this as the interpretive parallel to validity. I had to ask the question: is there a correspondence between the way the research participants perceive social constructs and the way I portray their viewpoints? I had to employ the following research strategies in my research to enhance credibility (Mertens, 2010, p.388).

1. Prolonged and substantial engagement: As I was a dual teacher and researcher in the site since the newly amalgamated school opened in 2011 this ensured that my prolonged and substantial engagement in the research site enhanced the credibility of my findings.
2. Persistent observation: I was able to observe the happenings in the research site on an ongoing basis from my day-to-day lived experiences in the school. These observations intensified during the period April 2013-May 2014 to incorporate my pilot study and full- scale field research.
3. Immersion/Crystallisation: I found the use of the dual processes of immersion and crystallisation helpful in the data analysis process. Immersion is a process whereby I

had to immerse myself in the data I had collected by reading or examining some portion of it in detail. I then engaged in crystallisation which is the process of temporarily suspending the process of examining or reading the data in order to reflect on the analysis experience and attempt to identify and articulate patterns or themes noticed during the immersion process. These dual processes continued until all the data had been examined and patterns and claims emerged from the data that were meaningful and could be well articulated and substantiated (Borkan, 1999). Both techniques of immersion and crystallisation were helpful in enhancing the credibility of this research study.

5.5.2 Ethical Measures

My ethical considerations stem from the constructivist paradigm, with the principal ethical objective being to provide a balanced representation of the social realities encountered. I drew my concerns chiefly from Donna Mertens' talk at the Summer School 2012, entitled - *Ethics and Designing Educational and Social Research*. The foundation of my ethical impetus lay with the principals of beneficence as maximising good outcomes for the individual research participants, and non-maleficence as the minimisation of risk or harm. Secondly, I had to treat the research participants with respect, including those who are not autonomous- the pupils that acted as research participants in my research site. Thirdly I had recourse to justice, in ensuring that the procedures were reasonable, non-exploitative, carefully considered and fairly administered (Belmont Report, 1979).

I also drew the ethical protocol for this study from Kvale and Brinkmann's (2008, pp.68-79) four fields of ethical uncertainty.

(a) Informed consent

- (b) Confidentiality
- (c) Consequences
- (d) Role of the researcher

At the outset of the research process I gained extensive permission and consent from all participants in the research: teachers, pupils, Board of Management. This research was also passed through the rigorous processes of University College Cork's ethics committee and my research proposal was accepted. This will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter. With regard to informed consent, all student participants were briefed in a group scenario, where the research study was outlined, as were the rights of students to withdraw from the study and their rights regarding confidentiality and anonymity.

As the site of my research is the school that I am teaching in, my primary research subjects are its teachers and pupils. I was conducting my research in "my backyard", hence Malone's article *Ethics at home; informed consent in your own backyard* struck particular resonance for my research study (Malone, 2003). The teachers and pupils were the key players in the backyard. They were potential, convenient and willing participants in my study. I conducted my research on the students that participated in my classes as it was convenient to track their unfolding identities. I had to consider the power dynamic as I was their teacher and they may have felt obliged to participate as there may be perceived consequences of their non-participation and subsequent withdrawal from the programme. I also had to consider the implications involved in friendship as methodology, as the teachers are my colleagues and friends. It was important to be mindful of the boundaries of friendship and not to abuse this relationship.

It was central to my role as researcher, teacher and responsible adult that there were no negative consequences of any description for individuals and the community in the course of this research. It was my duty to remain vigilant against any emergent situations that could have been potentially harmful. Kavale and Brinkmann (2008, p.73) refer to the issue of *beneficence*. They conclude that it is the “researcher’s responsibility to reflect on the possible consequences not only for the persons taking part in the study, but also for the larger group present”. In this research study, this means an awareness of the students, teachers and the school community.

For the duration of the study I assumed a dual role of researcher and teacher in the school at the centre of this study. This role was facilitated by school management. I was able to spend a significant amount of time in the research field. I remained very conscious of my dual role as a researcher and teacher in the research site and therefore I was conscious of maintaining the anonymity of participants and the community.

The above ethical issues permeate my research study. In addition, in the case of multiple social- realities I had to be careful about whose voice is seen and heard. As the chief participants are active agents in my research, participants may object to my characterisation of them and speak back. I had to be responsive to their objections.

I had to be careful in my work as a researcher not to think I knew the participant better than the participants knew themselves. This is a potential pitfall as I was also a participant in this research and had worked with many of the participants in the past.

5.5.3 Strategies for ethical use

Approval by the Social Research and Ethics Committee:

On 14th March 2013, I received ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) in University College Cork (UCC) for my research. This involved submitting a detailed application form outlining a description of my project: the aims of the project; a description and justification of methods and resources to be used including copies of the interview protocol; a statement of ethical issues raised by the project; arrangements for informing participants about the nature of the study; how I obtain informed consent and estimated start date and duration of the project. It also included assurances of the confidentiality of the data, maintaining anonymity for the participants and ensuring no risk to participants in involvement in the study. The letter of ethical approval states ‘I am pleased to say that we see no ethical impediment to your research as proposed and we are happy to grant approval’ (see appendix 14).

Informed consent:

Protection of the participants is of paramount importance in my research so the following strategies will be pursued.

Informed consent: The informed consent of the participants is obtained through the use of a form that specifies (a) the nature of the research, (b) the procedures in which participants can expect to participate, (c) a description of the means by which confidentiality will be protected, (d) a contact person to whom questions can be directed (e) a description of the risks and benefits of the research (Brenner, 2006, p.362). These forms are signed by the research participants; in the case of pupils their parents will counter-sign each form (see appendix 15).

Anonymity:

I acknowledge that guaranteeing research participants true anonymity poses significant challenges to me in my research. I am guided by the work of Van Den Hoonaard (2003), who shows that anonymity is a virtual impossibility in ethnographic research.

The quandary of anonymity, research ethics codes insist on anonymity while the practice of research makes it virtually impossible to maintain anonymity is only resolved with the involvement of the research participants and the researchers themselves (Van Den Hoonaard, 2003, p.147).

I endeavoured to protect the anonymity of the research community throughout the research by using pseudonyms during the data gathering stage in my field notes, and interview transcripts and I conducted the research under the watchful eyes of my supervisor who will help me to preserve the research participant's anonymity. I was acutely aware of the impossibility of protecting the anonymity of my research subjects both at a local community and a wider community level. My school is clearly identifiable as a newly amalgamated school and it is easy to trace which one it is. Despite giving the research informants pseudonyms they could be traced by their responses that identify subject departments or reference to particular events, people and place. Regardless of the assurances of any informed consent letter and the SREC process, I realised that offering the protection of true anonymity and confidentiality became mythical.

The following are strategies I will employ to ensure the ethical use of my research.

1. Member checks of transcript.
2. Sharing written information prior to publication
3. Allowing the participant to write his/her own interpretation.
4. Not to make promises I am unable to keep regarding control over interpretation.

Truth and honesty from my perspective as a researcher is paramount and these values will guide my ethical decisions throughout the research process. As a backyard researcher (Malone, 2003), I am guided by my desire to respect the research community and my colleagues within it.

Member Checks:

Taking data and interpretations back to participants in the study so they can confirm the credibility of the information and the narrative account (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.127)

I employed the use of member checking in this research as I wished to increase the validity and trustworthiness of findings of the study. I returned a sample of the interview transcripts to the participants and I also got representatives of key stakeholder groups to read through draft versions of the thesis. Member checking was one of the primary validation techniques that I used in this research. As I was both the data collector and data analyst, I had a strong desire to reduce the potential for researcher bias by actively involving the research participant in checking and confirming results. Lincoln and Guba (1985), recommend member checking as a means of enhancing rigour in qualitative research, proposing that credibility is inherent in the accurate descriptions or interpretations of phenomena. My use of member checking aligned with the multiple data collection methods used in the research enabled triangulation of knowledge about the phenomena. It also led to a more valid interpretation of the unfolding identities of both teacher and pupil in Coláiste Fionn.

5.5.4 Reflexivity in educational research

I am aware that as a researcher carrying out qualitative research, I played an integral part in the research process and final product. I acknowledge that my personal values are also embedded in this process. I endeavoured to counteract this through adopting a transparent and

reflexive stance around how the data was collected, analysed and presented. I had to look closely at my own experiences, values and beliefs and question the impact this personal autobiography might have on the research design or the collection, interpretation and presentation of data. There was a power imbalance, as a teacher within the research site, the relationship between myself and the student participants was not starting off on an equal footing, potentially affecting the dialogue between us. I was able to counteract this by acknowledging and reflecting on my existing beliefs and experiences. I was able to adopt a level of reflexivity which mitigated the impact of my own professional autobiography and foster a level of confidence in the validity of the research and ultimately my credibility as researcher. Furthermore, I adopted a transparent approach to this research from the outset, from design and piloting the study, to the collection, analysis and presentation of data. I had regular correspondence and meetings with my supervisors and these meeting challenged me to reflect on each step of the process as well as justify each decision I made. I am confident that despite the challenges of being a researcher embedded in my workplace I was able to overcome these principally through adopting a transparent and reflexive stance to the research process. A further limitation of my work revolved around power dynamics.

5.6 Pilot Testing

My research was piloted during the final term of the academic year 2012/13. The main research question that was focused on was a question of practice – What do people say? What do people do? It was decided to concentrate on four key ideas in this pilot: Identity, Meaning, Practice and Communities of Practice. The research methodologies employed in the pilot test set out to trace some aspects of these key ideas. The full details and findings of the pilot study

can be found (see appendix 17) of this research. I will now outline the data collection procedures that I employed in the full-scale study.

5.7 Data Collection Procedures

5.7.1 Ethnographic Observation

My role in undertaking this research fell into that of a complete participant (Mertens, 2010: 367). I am an employee of the research site. The usefulness of this tool as a data collection procedure is illustrated by Devine in her research on children's voice in the primary school setting (Devine, 2003: 7).

Detailed field notes were taken at each stage of observation and both teachers and pupils were given access to these if they wished. Although I usually spent break-times in the playground with the children, I occasionally went instead to the staff-room. Listening to staff-room talk about the children was an important part of the research process. It enabled me to build a fuller picture of the views, motivations, anxieties, tensions and joys of teaching (Devine, 2003, p.7).

When I used the tool of ethnographic observation as a data collection method in my research, I had to be cognisant of the following (Mertens, 2010, p.368).

The physical setting – I had to describe the physical environment of the school in such detail as to allow the reader to visualise the setting. In carrying out this task I had to describe the layout of rooms, their size, how the space is used, the lighting, how people are organised in the space, and the interpretive reaction of the program participants in this space.

Human and social environment – I had to address how people organised themselves into groups and sub-groups. I had to watch for patterns of interaction, direction of communication patterns, and changes in those patterns. I had to note how and who makes decisions and how are these communicated to the whole group.

Program activities and participant behaviours –I had to find a unit of activity, perhaps a staff meeting, a lunch break or morning break in the case of teachers. In relation to students it may be a class session, lunchtime, and a sports activity. I had to carry out a comprehensive description of this activity from the beginning, middle and end stages.

Informal interactions and unplanned activities-I had to gather descriptive information about what participants do and in particular, what people are saying to each other in the research site. I also had to observe body language and nonverbal cues.

Attend to the native language of program participants –I had to acquaint myself with the literal meaning of the language exchanged by participants, any connotations and relevant symbolism used.

Nonverbal communication-I had to be aware of any patterns of nonverbal communication used by participants to get the attention of others. I had to note dress codes, physical spacing like seating arrangements in the staff-room, or in a classroom setting.

Unobtrusive measures- I had to be aware of physical clues about program activities, areas that are used more or less in the building, staff-room.

Observing what does not happen- This was a powerful technique, if a program or activity was to have certain outcomes and these do not occur, then it is important to note this and also to look into why this has happened (Mertens, 2010, p.369).

Using the data collection technique of observation, I was able to collect data through my direct contact in the setting. As I was a teacher in the primary unit of analysis, I was afforded

several opportunities to carry our work and in so doing glean meaningful insights for my research. I studied the lived experiences, daily activities, and social context of everyday life from the perspectives of those being researched to gain an understanding of their life worlds. I entered into first-hand interaction with people in their everyday lives, and in so doing reached a better understanding of the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of the teachers and pupils in the study than I could by other methods. out to explore children's perspectives on their social world and particularly their use of space and time outside school. This method was particularly suitable for my research as my principal objective was to capture the voice of pupil and teacher in this lived world. The research participants allowed me to see their world and their actions within them. This helped me fulfil my goal of gaining an insider's depiction of the studied world.

5.7.2 Interviewing – individual and focus group

I employed the data collection technique of interviews for collecting information from the teacher participants in the site. I used focus group sessions as a means of collecting data from students.

Focus Groups:

I employed the use of a focus group in my pilot study and I found them a rich source of data collection. I continued to use focus groups as a method of data collection from both students and teachers. I used this technique as it did not rely on a question and answer interview style but rather on group interaction. During the pilot study I found that after a while the teachers in the focus group teased out issues and even began to ask me for my opinion on issues. As the group is considered the unit of analysis, I had to decide on the number of groups to have.

I attempted to elicit the views of all year groups from First year through to Leaving Certificate.

The focus group interview participants were student focus groups as well as teacher focus groups. Semi-structured interview questions were asked (see appendix 16). The three main themes were explored. The questions asked were open-ended in nature. Questions were arranged in a logical manner from the general to the specific.

Semi-structured interview for teachers

Unlike everyday conversation, the open-ended interview often begins with a big question, and proceeds in what some have called the funnel shape - beginning with large questions working down to detail (Brenner, 2006: 362).

Rationale for the design of the semi-structured interview protocol:

I was cognisant of Mertens advice on designing survey instruments (Mertens, 2010, p.187).

1. I outlined the various topics that I wanted to include.
2. I was mindful of keeping the questions brief and concise.
3. I explained to myself why I was asking each question.
4. I have a bias toward open-ended format questions; this was a deliberate attempt to get the informants to talk expansively on the interviewer's topic (Brenner, 2006, p.362).

I choose the qualitative interview as a research method as I believe it is a knowledge producing activity (Kvale, 2008, p.47). Kvale tells us that the research interview is the production site of knowledge. Interview knowledge is socially constructed in the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee. The knowledge is not merely found, mined, or given, but is actively created through questions and answers, and the product is co-authored by interviewer and interviewee. The production process continues through

the transcription, analysis, and reporting of the original interviews, with the reported knowledge tinged by the procedures and techniques applied on the way (Kvale, 2008:54). I endeavoured to co-produce knowledge through my interaction as interviewer with the teachers and pupils in the research site. The interview helped me to understand the researched on their own terms, and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences and cognitive processes (Brenner, 2006:357). Kvale contends that because the interview is an interactional relationship, both the informant and the interviewer are engaged in an on-going process of meaning making (Kvale, 1996). I found this during the recent pilot study when I interviewed a member of the teaching staff in the research site. She responded very well to the open-ended nature of the questions and I feel that this is a good approach to pursue in the main research study. The open-ended qualitative interview fits grounded theory methods particularly well (Charmaz, 2006, p.28), as they are both open-ended yet directed, shaped yet unrestricted and flexible in approach. This combination of flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing techniques fit grounded theory strategies for increasing the analytical incisiveness of the resultant analysis. Qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience. This interview can elicit news of the person's subjective world. The grounded theory approach differs from much in-depth interviewing because we narrow the range of interview topics to gather data for developing our theoretical frameworks as we proceed with conducting interviews.

5.7.3 Diary use

Researcher Diary

I also employed the uses of a personal research diary. I wrote a daily diary entry from the commencement of the pilot study in April 2013 to the conclusion of the research work in

May 2014. This was a good way of tracking my ethnographic observations. This diary provided valuable support data for tracking the sights and sounds of the research site. It was also a good help in confirming the validity of other data sources.

Student Diary

I got first-year students in my class to write a weekly Friday diary entry. This was a rich log of life as it unfolded for this cohort of students.

5.7.4 School communications media

School website

The school website provided an up to-date window into the lived experience of the research site. The report of WSE 2016 endorses my use of the website as a rich source of information on school life.

The very good quality school website acts as a clear window on the operation of the school, the range of activities undertaken, and the celebration of the achievements of the students. (WSE Report, 2016)

The above quotation from the Whole School Evaluation Report of 2016 highlights how effective a communication tool it is.

Staff internal email

The schools internal email system is the main method of communication used between staff in the school. Hence, I was able to use this in my research as an effective data gathering tool.

Ethical considerations surrounding access to data within the internal school email:

I obtained approval from the school Principal and also from the Board of Management of Coláiste Fionn. Teachers signed a consent form before participating in the study. The consent

form contained a description of the study, details of data gathering methods, a description of the potential benefits of the research, and an assurance that they could withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

All data was treated in a way which protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the teachers involved in the study. Teachers were informed that their identity would remain confidential and would not be disclosed either verbally or in publications based on the study. Pseudonyms were used. I remained mindful of all the ethical measures outlined in 5.5.2 regarding my usage of this data source in the research process. My respect for the school community was one of the guiding ethical considerations permeating all aspects of this research process.

5.7.5 Visual Research Methodologies

I employed visual research in this study as it is a qualitative research methodology that relies on the use of artistic mediums to produce and represent knowledge. I used photography, students' drawings and artwork to highlight aspects of lived experience.

Photo-interviewing

I gave a sample of students in each year group disposable cameras. They took photographs over the course of a week of their favourite place in the school and the events that marked their lived experiences over that time frame. These photographs were developed and the students interviewed. Photos facilitate interviews by building bridges between the interviewer and the interviewee. As the interviewer and interviewee pore over photos together and discuss what they see and what this means, communication is encouraged and rapport and trust is built. While photos decentre the interviewee in terms of the interaction, they simultaneously create space for the interviewee's meanings and perspectives: when people

discuss the meaning of photographs, they try to figure out something together (Harper, 2002, p.23), leading to a negotiated understanding (Heisley and Levy 1991). Photo interviews are useful in situations as they empower the research participants and give them more authority. Images and their mode of production are central to children's culture from a very early age and are therefore empowering (Prosser and Burke 2006, p. 408).

I successfully employed this technique as a method of data collection for the photo-interview. Interviewee's were asked to select around ten photos from their personal collections and describe them to the interviewer. Students were more willing to tell stories about photos, than narrating their school story or responding to set questions by the interviewer. The interviewee selection of photos gave them control over the structuring of the interview. The photos fostered discussion around a student's favourite place in the school. Photo-interviews generated rich and complex data. Photos stimulate people to talk about their thoughts, feelings, memories and experiences, to work things out. Photo-interviews bring out the personal significance and meaning of what is depicted in photos. Photos can also enable participants to introduce their priorities and perspectives into interviews. This is particularly likely where personal photos, or those the interviewee has generated, are discussed.

Participant – generated photographs are widely valued for enabling participants to set the interview agenda. Janine Hunter and Ann Phoenix (2008, p.345) noted that their teenage participants used their photos to show rather than tell aspects of their identity that may otherwise be hidden. This was a very important aspect for me as participant identity plays a central role in this research study.

Students Drawings

I also used student drawings as a means of illustrating reality. I got first-year students to draw their experiences of life in the school after 8 weeks and again on conclusion of the school year. These were used to demonstrate their infolding identities.

Student Artwork

The artwork produces by students was analysed as evidence for their performing identities.

This methodology was employed particularly in Chapter 7 of the study as the visual narrative was traced as a means of negotiating identity.

School Photographs and Pictorial artefacts

Finally, I examined the meaning making of a selection of significant photographs and artwork that adorned the school walls as evidence of the social, historic, political and cultural unfolding of identity.

All of the above artistic mediums were helpful to me in my quest to produce and represent knowledge.

5.7.5 Data Collection Timeline

Table 5A Data Collection Timeline:

Method	Scale/Sample	Timing
School Communications Media School Website Staff Internal email		April 2013-May 2014
Visual Research Methodologies Student Drawings in Class Displays of Student Artwork School Photographs & Pictorial Artefacts	1 st year Business Studies Class (24 Students) Purposeful Random Sample	April 2013-May 2014 Midterm/End of Academic Year April 2013-May 2014
Diary Researcher Diary Student Diary	1 st year Business Studies Class (24 Students) Purposeful Random Sample	April 2013-May 2014 September 2013 –May 2014
Interviews Student Photo Interviews Staff interviews	6 Students (1 from each year group) 6 Staff Members Purposeful Random Sample	Pilot Study – April 2013-May 2013 April 2013-May 2014
Focus Group Staff Focus Groups Student Focus Group	1 Focus group of Thursday Club Teachers 1 Focus group of Teachers from school cohort 1 Focus group of 2 nd Year Business Students (8) Purposeful Random Sample	Pilot Study- April 2013-May 2013
Ethnographic Observations		April 2013-May 2014

See Pages 140-141 re Purposeful random Sampling

5.8 Data Analysis Procedures

5.8.1 Thematic Analysis

I choose thematic analysis as the method of data analysis for my research. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Good thematic analysis helped to interpret and make sense of the data. Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide which was a useful framework for conducting the analysis.

Step 1: Become familiar with the data.

The first step involved reading and re-reading the transcripts. I tried to become familiar with the entire body of data. I found it useful to make notes and jot down early impressions.

Step 2: Generate initial codes.

In this phase I started to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding reduced lots of data into small chunks of meaning. I was concerned with addressing specific research questions and I analysed the data with this in mind. I coded each segment of data that was relevant to or captured something interesting about the research question. I used open coding and did not pre-set codes and developed and modified the codes as I worked through the coding process.

Step 3: Search for themes.

A theme is characterised by its significance, I examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme. I then collated them and was able to come up with key themes for this study.

Step 4: Review themes.

I reviewed, modified and developed the preliminary themes that I identified in step 3. I then gathered all the data that was relevant to each theme. I read the data associated with each theme and considered whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set.

Step 5: Define themes.

In the final refinement of themes, my aim was to “identify the essence of what each theme is about”. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). what is the theme saying? If there are subthemes, how do they interact and relate to the main theme?

One of the key issues that surprised me as I conducted my data analysis was, I did not find a lot of counterfactual data for the main themes explored. I included the counterfactual data that I sourced as it helped to refine the wider authenticity of the findings.

5.8.2 Open coding

I used this method of analysis for the responses of the teachers and pupils in the interviews and the focus groups. The responses were clustered where possible. The recurring phrases and comments were identified and coded into broader themes. I captured the common themes in my analysis as well as the unique comments and constructs. I was then able to identify any sub themes. I coded the data manually from the transcripts of the interviews and focus sessions (Lasky, 2005:904).

5.8.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

The final data analysis technique that I employed was Critical Discourse Analysis. This focused on understanding the meaning of participant’s language (Mertens, 2010, p.427).

Using this analysis technique, I was able to answer such questions as:

What are the participants actually saying?

Why did they choose to say it this way?

This basis analytic process involves examining three dimensions (Fairclough, 2003): analysis of the text, which involves the study of language structures such as the use of verbs; use of statement, questions, or declarations; and the thematic structure. As meanings are constructed, as opposed to given, I had to make visible how meanings in the representations

are produced. I was challenged to notice ambiguities, incoherence and contradictions. I had to continually deconstruct and construct the “intended” meanings. I remained cognisant of the fact that the worlds that we study are created through the texts that we write (Denzin, 1995, p.389).

5.9 Participant Voice

The following are the main voices heard in the findings of this study

Main voices:

Katie - The sporty newcomer first year pupil, who has moved from primary school. Katie represents first year students as they try to settle into their new lives in Coláiste Fionn.

Grainne -The sporty senior cycle pupil who acts as a coach and mentor to new athletes. She embodies the role of an old-timer pupil in the school setting.

Alice - The newcomer teacher, Alice has just completed her PGDE and this is her first - year teaching. She struggles to author herself and be authored as a competent teacher. She embodies life as a teacher in this newly amalgamated school setting.

Joan - The old-timer teacher, Joan is a teacher with a lot of teaching experience, she served in two second level schools in Bayview, prior to amalgamation and nears retirement. She plays a key role in supporting Alice on her journey as a newly qualified teacher in Coláiste Fionn.

Other Voices and chosen as representative of the wider voices in this study

Other teachers

There are other teacher voices like that of *Mattie* who is also a newly qualified teacher, the voices of the teachers who make up Thursday Club, - *Anna* who is a regular attender at the Thursday evenings social gatherings. There are teacher voices like that of *Cáit*. She has navigated from one of the former schools and her small tales are insightful as regards the

changes experience from a staff perspective. This chorus of change is echoed by teachers like *Daniel* and *Ellie. Rachel* who leads the staff in School Developmental Planning.

Other pupils

Moll demonstrates how participation in the first -year art class helps her gain a sense of belonging.

Cassy is a student whose participation is challenged by her disability.

Bob is the student who is positioned as academically challenged.

Lauren is a first - year student and she embodies much of the fun and excitement of living as a first year through the highlight of the school year –the school tour.

Other voices

Emma is the voice of the newly formed Parents Association community of practice.

Vignettes

These were co-created based on diaries, observation and interviews.

Together all of these voices are orchestrated to amplify the sounds of living in this newly amalgamated school, Coláiste Fionn.

5.10 Limitations of the study

As a teacher in this research site I was operating as an insider and as a full participant in local cultures. This position gave me a deeper, lived understanding of local meaning making, but also created additional challenges (Green, Camilli, Elmore, 2006, p. 286). I used reflexive strategies to examine my fieldwork with a critical eye.

5.10.1 Power Dynamics with students and colleagues

I was a teacher researcher in the research site, I had to be cognisant of the power relationships that existed in the site. In particular the students that I had some power over and the shared understandings that existed between myself and my colleagues. I had to be conscious of how my research could strengthen this or abuse it. The research design for this study incorporated strategies which I will outline that helped to demonstrate this mutual respect and justice.

1. The benefits of this research to students and teachers were outlined to both participant groups.
2. The risks were outlined to teachers and pupils participating in the study.
3. I demonstrated to participants how I would endeavour to protect them throughout the research process.
 - a. They were informed about the general nature of the study and what was expected of them.
 - b. They gave informed consent.
 - c. They could refuse to participate and withdraw without penalty after beginning the research.
 - d. Their anonymity and the confidentiality of data were protected as appropriate.

As a teacher research one of my primary responsibilities was to the students and fellow teachers in the research site. I had to balance the demands of my research with my other professional demands. As, a teacher researcher, my first priority lay with being a teacher. I had a deep respect for those with whom I worked. I openly shared information about my research as it unfolded. Despite the fact that I was seeking knowledge, I also sought to nurture the wellbeing of students and colleagues in the research site. Open communication prevailed throughout the project helped to ensure that the power dynamics with students and

colleagues did not compromise validity. I feel that the above strategies helped to ensure that the implications of power dynamics did not compromise the validity of the data. I employed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for describing procedures to promote validity.

1. I used more than one method of data collection.
2. I combined "thick description", semi-structured interviews, focus groups and close analysis to help reach a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. This triangulation helped to counteract power dynamics.
3. I used member checking when data and interpretations were taken back to both student and teacher.

Hence despite the challenge of being a teacher researcher in this research study, I feel that the strategies that I employed in the project helped to ensure that power dynamics with students and teachers did not compromise the validity of the data.

One of my biggest challenges as an insider was to make the familiar strange, so as to make it visible. Some of the strategies that helped me to do this were taking and studying photographs, drawing maps and sketches of classrooms, recording and analysing episodes of social interaction in detail. These were particularly effective ways of distancing me from a familiar scene (Green, Camilli, Elmore, 2006, p. 287). I conducted my research in 'my backyard', hence Malone's article *Ethics at home; informed consent in your own backyard* strikes particular resonance for my research study (Malone, 2003). The teachers and the pupils were the key players in the backyard. They were convenient and willing participants in my study. My research included students that I was teaching, I had to consider the power dynamic as I was their teacher and they may have felt obliged to participate in the study. I also had to consider the implications involved in friendship as a methodology as the teachers in this study are my colleagues and friends. It was important that I remained mindful of the

boundaries of friendship and not to abuse this relationship. I was acutely aware of the challenge of protecting the true anonymity of my research subjects both at a local community and at a wider community level.

5.11 Timelines

Table 5B: Research Timeline

	SEPT-DEC	JAN-APRIL	MAY-AUGUST
YEAR 1 Sept 2011 -Sept 2012	ASSIGNMENTS	ASSIGNMENTS	THESIS PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENTS SUMMER SCHOOL
YEAR 2 Sept 2012-Sept 2013	ETHICAL APPROVAL FIELD RESEARCH RESEARCHERS DIARY/ ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENTS	FIELD RESEARCH PILOT INTERVIEWS ACTUAL INTERVIEWS FOCUS GROUPS OBSERVATION DIARY ASSIGNMENTS	REVIEW OF LITERATURE REFINING RESEARCH DESIGN ASSIGNMENTS
YEAR 3 Sept 2013-Sept 2014	FIELD RESEARCH INTERVIEWS FOCUS GROUPS OBSERVATION DIARY ASSIGNMENTS	FIELD RESEARCH INTERVIEWS FOCUS GROUPS OBSERVATION DIARY ASSIGNMENTS	COMPLETION OF INITIAL DRAFT OF CLAIMS AND FINDINGS FROM PILOT STUDY SUMMER SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS
Sept 2014-Oct 2018	DATA ANALYSIS	DATA ANALYSIS	COMPLETION OF THESIS VIVA

I commenced the doctoral programme in September 2011 and this first year involved much idea generation for my research as well as significant reviews of literature. I conducted my pilot research in year 2 of the programme from April 2013-May 2013. The formal research

was conducted in the academic year 2013 -2014. There were various occasions throughout the academic year that facilitated my ethnographic observations. See appendix for school calendars 2012/13 and 2013/14. Individually and collectively all these events gave me key insights into the practices and negotiations that were taking place in my research site.

5.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological path I pursued during my research journey. This is steered by the constructivist paradigm that my research study is steeped in. The research design is qualitative and emergent hence I have chosen the case study as the primary qualitative research approach due to the richness of the phenomenon studied and the extensiveness of its real - life context. I used thematic analysis as the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Good thematic analysis helped me to interpret and make sense of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I followed a visual literacy narrative as I traced teacher and pupil identity, which is a focal point in my study. My pilot study illuminated the suitability of my research methodologies as means of meaning making and their best fit to data collection techniques. The use of photo-voice gave me a side-way entry point into the lived worlds of research participants. I was cognisant of the ethical challenges posed by my emergent research, particularly with regard to issues surrounding participant anonymity and remain confident that as a backyard researcher (Malone, 2003), the respect which I hold for the research community guided me on an ethical pathway. The following chapters will now document and discuss the data and findings of this study.

Chapter 6: How sport is used as a tool to negotiate identities in new spaces

The person has been correspondingly transformed into a practitioner, a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skill and discourse are part of a developing identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.122).

6.1 Introduction

This first Chapter focuses on findings from interview, diary and observation data. I demonstrate how people transform themselves in the day-to-day, moment-by-moment encounters of everyday interactive social practice. In Coláiste Fionn, staff and students from divergent cultural worlds engage in identity making processes, produced from the cultural resources available to them. They are caught between the past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses that attract them. This chapter provides evidence of the fluidity of an identity as it changes depending on what one is doing, where one is and who one is with in sporting activities. I present data analyses that illustrate how both student and teacher use sport as a transformative tool for shaping their identities and social worlds.

Whilst recognising there are many other transformative tools available in Coláiste Fionn from the educational to the cultural, to the artistic, I have chosen to focus on sport in this Chapter as I feel it is a central means through which identity is negotiated in this research site. Coláiste Fionn's Principal at the school awards spoke of his pride in the fact that all our students have been given every possible opportunity to be challenged to explore, to participate and to achieve success. He believes participation builds confidence and allows students to fully express themselves as individuals as well as team members. The findings of Section 1 of this chapter evidence this participation in sport through the lens of the weekly diary entries of a First-year pupil, Katie. The chapter develops this theme in Section 2 when I examine newcomer teacher Alice's involvement in sport as she too becomes competent in a practice and her identity is moulded in this social space. In Section 3 I present evidence of the unfolding identities of other

pupils through bespoke sporting moments. Immersion in school sporting activities write them into *being part of the story*, and it allows them to claim their space in Coláiste Fionn.

Table 6A: Structure of the chapter

<u>Section 1-Newcomer First Year</u>	Theoretical	Key Probes
How Katie's identity is negotiated through sport?	Framework	Is Identity
	Lave	
	Wenger	Performed
<u>Section 2- Newcomer Teacher</u>		Emergent
How Alice's identity is negotiated through sport?		Fluid
	Holland	Relational
		Negotiated
		Historical
<u>Section 3</u>	Rogoff	Unfolding in the everyday
How other pupils negotiate their identities through sport?		
	Lawler	

Vignette 1- First year Katie

Week 1: Induction Day, August 2013 –Katie’s very first day in Colaiste Fionn.

The first years are in school until 12:15pm on their first day and there is an organised timetable of activities for the morning. They are given talks on select topics and now it is time for the sports session. The sports talk is given by one of the teachers from the PE Department. Katie loves sports and this is one of the main reasons that she is looking forward to her time in Coláiste Fionn. She sits up to listen to all she is being told. The sports facilities that exist are top class and of the highest and most modern standard. Monday and Tuesday lunchtimes are dedicated to intra- school tournaments, including basketball, soccer and badminton. The students are told that the main sports that students participate in include basketball, soccer, rugby, GAA, Athletics, badminton, table tennis and golf. Katie is looking forward to continuing her participation in Gaelic football and may take up a few more sports that interest her. The PE teacher tells them about some of the school’s sports successes in the last academic year at team and individual levels. This makes the students realise just how sporty an environment Coláiste Fionn is. Katie dreams about all the sporting activities that she will engage in. She knows that she would like to continue her football but has a keen interest in taking up tag rugby. Rugby has really taken off as a sport in the area and ladies rugby in particular. She hopes that this will complement her skills in Gaelic football. She is eager to try out the new gym in the school to improve her strength and conditioning. She remembers hearing about Ronan O’ Gara’s visit to the school, the first guest speaker at awards night. Her friend had told her about how well kept a secret the identity of the high-profile speaker was. The entire PE hall was packed with parents, pupils and distinguished guests. Ronan was escorted into the hall by the Principal to a standing ovation. She hopes that she will be able to attend this prestigious school event at the end of the school year and maybe receive an award for her sports participation. She is awoken from

her day dream as her friend whispers to her what sports she'd like to do? The PE teacher also enquires into the sports that the class participate in. Katie gazes out the window of the classroom of L1. It overlooks the vast school pitch beyond, and she wonders how any student could concentrate with such an array of sports facilities to feast their eyes on.

6.2 Crafting identity in the moment-to- moment

Katie Constructs a self

There is a great effort put into First Year Induction in Coláiste Fionn. The timetable outlined for the day as well as the specific details of Induction Day indicate how important getting first years to settle into school life is to this school.

In the first- year information booklet there are two pages dedicated to outlining sport in the school. This is the booklet that prospective 6th class pupils receive in November prior to the school's enrolment evening. The pages outline the excellent school's sporting facilities as well as including various pictures of the previous year's sporting achievements from road bowling to winning the O'Brien Munster Cup in rugby. The importance of sport is also underlined by allocating it a session for each of the new first-year classes during induction day.

Table 6B: First -year Induction Day timetable

Time	1 Aisling	1 íde	1 Colm	1 Oisín
10.00-10.25am	Orientation Ground Floor and First Floor	Ice Breaker SPHE L1/21	Sport Library/PE	General information L1/19
10.30-10.55am	General Information L1/19	Orientation Ground Floor and First Floor	Ice Breaker L1/21	Sport Library/PE
10.55-11.15am	BREAK			
11.15-11.40am	Sport Library/PE	General Information L1/19	Orientation Ground Floor and First Floor	Ice Breaker L1/21
11.45-12.15pm	Ice Breaker L1/21	Sport Library/PE	General Information	Orientation

The school's Deputy Principal is very involved in the pastoral life of the school and ensuring that incoming First-years settle into school life quickly in Coláiste Fionn. In his interview for this research he emphasises how students' involvement in sport during primary school helps ensure that they already know many of their First-year classmates before coming into secondary school. This makes the transition from primary to secondary school much easier.

What I have noticed over the years, maybe particularly in this school, even though it is a big school and there is a major change involved in the transition in terms of knowing other students from other schools. I don't think if I go back to my own time on that 20/30 years ago. I think kids know each other before they come in at all whether that from extra- curricular activities like Sciath na Scoil in the primary school, whether through athletics or the rugby club. What I notice is that the kids coming in now mingle more easily with each other, gender wise, age wise. I notice they are not as clanish as they would have been (Deputy Principal, June 2014).

Despite the Deputy Principal's feelings that it is easy for First Years to settle into their new environment, Katie's diary entries telling her experience illustrates that as an incoming first-year she found it difficult to settle in her new school, as can be seen from her reflections on those early days in Coláiste Fionn.

I was scared on my first day. I remember walking in and seeing the table full of students. When I sat down at my table with my class, I only knew the people that came from my primary school. I found it hard to know which class to go to so I usually followed people in my class (Katie, October 2013).

She uses the word scared to show how fearful she is in her new environment. She recalls only knowing the people from her old primary school. She also found it difficult to navigate around the school and followed her classmates as she moved from classroom to classroom. By midterm break it appears that she has settled a lot into her class but still has a difficulty finding her way around the school.

I like most of the subjects but some I find quite hard. I got to know my class and I wasn't shy anymore. I'm so happy to have that class. Still after all this time I don't know what classrooms for which subject but I always find someone in my class to follow (Katie, October 2013).

Katie is beginning to settle more into her new environment and is very happy in the class she is in. Katie is almost like the lost sheep as she tries to come to grips with the sheer size of this new building. She relies on following her classmates as she moves from subject to subject. Katie is conscious of her status as a newcomer first year in this school. When it's finally Friday she writes of her excitement looking forward to mid-term.

Our last class on Friday is SPHE, the last class until mid-term, so excited. Everyone was anxious to get out, the bell went and everyone moved quickly to the door, but the teacher stopped us. But we were still dying to get out. When we had settled, the teacher let us out and we ran out happily. Something I remember about school is when the bell rings at the end of school and as you walk down the stairs you can see the sea of blue people rushing below you. And as you try walk down the stairs, you hear the older kids talking about how slow the “First years” are (Katie, November 2013).

There is a hierarchy of importance and the first years are the most junior year group in the school. Katie realises this as she processes the whispers of how slow the “first years” are as she descends the stairs. The older pupils are a bit annoyed that the first years aren’t able to move as fast down the stairs. The sea of blue depicts the filing by of pupils in their blue school uniform. She tries to contain her excitement as she looks forward to the week off for mid-term and breaths a sigh of relief that she has managed to complete her first half term in Coláiste Fionn. Hence her continued involvement in sport is a key activity that helps in her transition from primary to secondary school. Katie is one such active participant yearning for meaning and identity in this new social world. She will layer all these meaningful sporting experiences that she encounters in Coláiste Fionn to form a construction of her identity -a self. Jean Lave’s writings inform us that learners are active participants seeking meaning and identity in a social world. Today Katie has had her formal introduction to the world of sport in Colaiste Fionn. The talk from the PE teacher has caused her to dream about new sporting possibilities. The teacher was able to tell the first years the reason why Ronan O’Gara was chosen as the special guest speaker for the school awards at the end of the school’s first year in existence. Ronan is “the embodiment of dedication, determination, hard work and a real team player-all vital components in achieving success both on and off the field”. Katie listened to all this and continues to dream about boundless sporting possibilities. Her identity will develop as she participates in sport with others around her. Her identity is fluid and will change depending on the activities she chooses to do, where she is and who she is with.

When she takes up new sports like tag-rugby she will learn new skills and play in new pitches with new people. When she continues to play Gaelic football, she will play alongside old friends as well as new. Katie is the agent and she has the power to act, to play. Her identity is performed in the sports that she will participate in. As she participates with others she forms meaningful experiences and forms a construction of identity: a self. Katie's identity may be different in the various communities of practice that she participates in. Lave's theory of agent, activity and world tells us that who we are, played out in the context of who we are allowed to be, influences in every context the shared resources we can appropriate to participate in different practices. Hence Katie can only participate in sport if the other pupils on the school team join her be it the athletics squad or the Gaelic football team. As an agent, she can only be successful in her sporting practices when the shared agency, mediated and distributed within the group allows her to be agentive in her actions. We continue to trace Katie's agentive actions and the unfolding of her new identity as she is scaffolded by the senior pupil Gráinne.

Vignette 2

Week 2- September 2013

The athletics training takes place on Monday and Friday lunchtime. There is a great interest particularly from the new first year students. The West Cork School's Cross Country is taking place toward the end of September and this is a great focus point for the athletes. Katie is very fit from her months of GAA training over the summer and she enjoys these sessions. One of the school's more senior athletes Gráinne helps out with the training sessions and she is very supportive of the junior athletes. She takes on the role of mentor as well as coach to the athletes. Katie has often seen pictures of Gráinne and accounts of her athletic prowess in the local newspapers. Today Gráinne takes a hands-on role in the

coaching session. She demonstrates the warm up exercises and stresses the importance of them to prevent injury. Katie is happy when she is singled out by Gráinne to demonstrate the Jumping Jack technique. Katie feels tired as she returns to the changing room. She grabs a quick bite of her sandwich before dashing to the locker to put in her gear-bag and pick out her books for the last two classes of the day.

6.2.1 Growing through activity

Lave refers to activity as the particular task one is involved in, and which leads to our engagement in communities of practice. Today we see Katie taking part in the school lunchtime athletics session. She participates alongside the other athletes from the various year groups in the school. Even though they progress together through the training session from warm up to cool down as one glances from one athlete to another in the community there are varying degrees of difference. The senior athletes are able to endure a more rigorous training session whilst the junior athletes are able to do much less and require more instruction and encouragement from their mentor, Gráinne. As each of these agents on the training pitch goes about their training routine, the particular task in question brings something unique to their participation and priorities regarding the importance of developing unique identities in particular communities of practice. Gráinne helps the junior athletes settle into school life in Coláiste Fionn as well as developing their skill and competence as athletes. Vygotsky formulated his notion of the zone of proximal development which he defined as the distance between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p.76). Students like Katie can do more with the help of others like Gráinne, than they could on their own. Vygotsky contends that the mind is a socially mediated phenomenon. Newcomers like Katie to the school

athletics squad learn to be full members through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Learners like Katie participate in communities of practice and the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of their community.

Vignette 3

Week 4- September 2013

This morning she is heading to the first athletic event of the school calendar, the West Cork Schools Cross Country event. There are about 70 athletes competing today. It is important to have competitors from all year groups in all races to capture the best overall school shields. The bus is to depart at 10:30 so Katie and her friends leave class at 10:15am. They dash to their lockers and swap their school bags for their gear bags. They run out to the bus depot and look forward to the rest of the day's escape from the drudgery of school life. This is her first time leaving the school on a school event and she is almost a month there now. The bus finally takes off after the roll call and bus fee collection. It's only a 30minute drive so they arrive shortly. They quickly file out of the bus onto the field. They go to the changing rooms to get ready for the first race of the day. Ms Roche hands them all a Coláiste Fionn singlet to wear. These are very smart and Katie likes its blue and white colours. It's time for the warm up and Gráinne takes them for a short lap of the pitch. The whistle signals the start of the first-year girl's race. There is a big field of competitors in this event. It's hard at the start with so many running to get ahead. The pace is faster than Katie anticipated. She's well up front as the bell sounds for the final lap of the pitch. Ms Roche, Gráinne and the other school athletes are everywhere encouraging and supporting the athletes. Katie is thrilled with her race as she comes third overall and the school first

year girls team win the best team overall. Photographs are taken by the local newspaper and school staff. Katie feels very proud of her achievement. She spends the rest of the morning cheering on the other school athletes. She realises just how talented the school athletes are as they are well placed in all of the races. They wait until the end to get news of the team prizes and of course to hear the announcement of the best boys and girl's school in the event. The entire group congregates for the anticipated moment. HURRAY. It's victory for Coláiste Fionn as the school is victorious in both categories. The shields are presented to two of the school's senior athletes and everyone gathers around for a final photograph. They board the bus and are promised a stop at the local Centra shop for refreshment before heading back to school. There are lots of snap chats sent on the bus. Katie is tired but she had a great day. It was great to get two medals, the individual bronze one for her own race and the gold medal for the team prize. They arrive back to school just before the final bell at 3.31pm. She is very proud when an announcement is made by the school principal on the school intercom system, congratulating all the athletes on their success. There is a round of applause in the classroom when a few teachers mention how well the athletes have done. There is a power-point put up of the event to be seen by all of the school in the canteen.

6.2.2 Identity formation- Katie as agent having the power to act

Katie as agent has the power to act. She brings something unique to the shared practices of the activity of the group. In the case of a school match, as she plays, she participates and acts as a historically located individual created by her own personal history of participation. Even though Katie is only in the school a month she has layered her experiences and identities over one another to form histories of participation with different communities of practice. Katie as a newcomer has gained member status. She has learned to participate in

group activity through apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995). Wenger (1998) tells us that learning is a process of identity formation. When something is interesting and meaningful and a part of our identity, we are more likely to learn from it. Katie has always been interested in sports. She brings this interest with her from her history of participation. She continues to participate in meaningful practices in Coláiste Fionn. Learning is not situated in individual minds like Katie's. She needs and continues to need others around her in order to learn. Katie has learned so much through her involvement in sport since she came to Coláiste Fionn a short month ago. Her participation in the practice of cross - country running has facilitated her interaction with her own first year students, other school athletes as well as athletes from other schools in West Cork. Learning is indeed situated in group activity (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and distributed across group participation (Rogoff, 1995). When Katie goes on her first sports outing with the school she participates jointly with fellow students and trainers. Her identity thickens and she feels a greater sense of belonging in the school community.

Lawler looks at how we might consider how identities are socially produced (Lawler, 2008). She looks at how different forms of identity should be seen as interactive and mutually constitutive. Her claim is that identity needs to be understood not as belonging within the individual like Katie, but as produced between persons in social relations, like the social relations developed between Katie and all the students and teachers she interacts with through her involvement in sport. Hence her identity in Colaiste Fionn is socially produced, socially embedded and worked out in her everyday social life.

We are both made and unmade by each other (Lawler, 2008, p.149).

Katie transforms as she layers these meaningful sporting experiences and stories to form a construction of identity. Her identity is fluid in nature and changes depending on the

activities she participates in and the people she interacts with. Her identity is allowed to unfold in this everyday place (Lave, 1988).

Vignette 4

Weekly training sessions:

The Gaelic football training sessions take place on Tuesday at lunchtime. These are great fun. They usually do some skills first and end the session with a short match. Katie finds it hard get changed, eat her lunch and get back on time to class. The girls were late arriving to class at 2:05pm and her teacher was not happy. They explained that they were at football training but this fell on deaf ears. They were cautioned and told that they would have to have a note in their journals if this was ever to happen again. There is a first-year football blitz taking place next week and Katie looks forward to another day out. Katie loves football, she is currently training for the Cork team, but doesn't think she'll make the team. Her club team won the under 16 finals on Saturday. She played the whole game in wing back, even though she's only 13!

Her tag rugby training session also takes place at lunch time. It's usually on Thursday lunch time. Two of the teachers train the girls on the school pitch. The drills are great fun and Katie looks forward to these training sessions. The girls practice passing in lines and working on trying to do it backwards. The training ended with a short 5-minute game to put the passing into practice. The local development officer takes the girls to their first blitz in Thomond Park. This is another great outing and the girls perform surprisingly well against the opposition. There was great excitement in the school this week amongst rugby fans as the Munster Rugby Women's captain came to visit the school with the RBS cup. Katie and her team went for a picture with the Rugby cup and this was the highlight of her week. Katie can't believe that she is standing next to Niamh Biggs as she has only seen her on television. She is so excited to be part of this moment in time. She is allowed take a selfie and this is a

treasured memory for her. There is such a buzz around as the girls are allowed to mingle and chat with her as well as get some autographs signed.

6.2.3 Practices invested in

Etienne Wenger describes learning as a changing relationship of participation in the world. It occurs socially. The practices in which we find meaning become the practices that we invest our identities in. We share them with others in a community of practice. Katie's participation, the social experience of living in the sporting world of Coláiste Fionn, is a rich source of her identity formation. Katie's learning occurs in the ordinary day-to-day practices of school life. The habitual Gaelic football training session that takes place on a Tuesday lunchtime is a great social opportunity for Katie to tog out with another bunch of sporty friends. There is banter and exchanges in the dressing room as well as on the short walk up to the pitch. There is never enough time to eat a decent lunch and she usually gets into trouble for being late for her first class after lunch. Katie loves Gaelic football and dreams of a place on the Cork team. She has to attend training sessions for this along with her school training session. She writes in her diary of this.

I'm going to the cinema tomorrow after football training! Yay! I love football! ♥
Its training for the Cork team, kinda like trials, but I don't think I'll get on the team
(Katie, January, 2014).

She feels she is not good enough to make the Cork team but is quietly hopeful. She writes of her delight at playing U16, despite being only 13 now.

P.S We won our U.16 West Cork final on Saturday. I started and played the whole game in Wing back, even though I'm only 13! (Katie, January, 2014).

Through their engagement in the practices of doing school, doing sport with others both Katie and Gráinne are living culturally and negotiating their way of being in the culture of Coláiste Fionn. They are producing and reproducing the culture that they are engaging in. This is very evident when we examine Katie's participation in Tag rugby. This is a new sport that she

takes up in the first term in Coláiste Fionn. It calls for Katie to learn a new skill set alongside new participants. When she participates, she is producing the culture of this place as well as reproducing the culture of rugby that is 25 years in existence in this community. The micro culture of rugby in Coláiste Fionn is married to the macro culture of rugby in Ireland when Niamh Briggs Brings the Women's RBS six nations cup to the school. Katie is delighted to avail of the photo opportunity. In her diary she recalls

This week I learned how to make a swiss-roll. The girls' and boys' rugby teams got to meet the Munster rugby women's captain and she brought the RBS cup to show us and we got to take some pictures. With the rugby cup (Katie, November 2013).

When we look at what Katie pays attention to, what is the salient identity that gathers her up? It is of no surprise that she is drawn to the sporting community. She is interested in the sports facilities and is eager to participate and this is evident from her attentive ear at induction day. Sport gives her a perspective on the world of Coláiste Fionn which results in her interpreting events and others actions in this light - through the sporting lens. Her relationship with Gráinne, the senior athlete and pupil in the school sporting community is pivotal in Katie's negotiation of meaning in this new-found space. Katie plays her part in a social script of sportiness which is relevant to the world of its participants. Katie buys into this world and claws her way toward full membership through the guidance of Gráinne. Katie's history of participation in sport in her life prior to coming to Coláiste Fionn, helps her to understand the subtleties of this sporting community. Hence, she is buying into a valued practice and plays the brokering game in its exchanges. In being able to participate, she shares the perspectives the participants in this community value. Katie's relationship with Gráinne allows both to be made and unmade by each other. They are both responsible for the reciprocal moulding of each other's identities by their everyday seemingly small actions. Gráinne's simple instructions to Katie on effective race preparation and Katie's assimilation of these practices.

Both are changed by their bespoke moment-to-moment interactions and the forces that they each bring to the relationship. These exchanges are social in their construction, appearing to be simple but never to be taken for-granted. These are the kind of exchanges that cause Katie to be made into the person she is, to be transformed by her relationship with Gráinne.

Gráinne is also transformed by her relationship with Katie and the junior athletes. Through her generosity of spirit she contributes to transforming other pupil's experiences and practices in Coláiste Fionn. Gráinne epitomises the valued practices of the athletics community in the school. She is a very competent athlete herself but she has given freely her own time to coach and share much of her passion and dedication to her sport with the junior athletes.

Katie's membership of the athletics squad shapes her identity through her day-to-day encounters with the familiar. These familiar routines include warm-ups, running laps and cooling down exercises. Katie manages to manifest herself by what she recognises. Some people are better equipped than others to control and shape their identities in a given situation depending on their familiarity with it. There was no great struggle for Katie to extend her competence in this community as the tools that she brings in her toolkit, her evolving sporting identity, align with the valued practices of Coláiste Fionn. Lave and Wenger's notion of 'legitimate peripheral participation', serves to highlight the process by which learners like Katie become competent, barely adopt or reject the roles and practices of the communities they encounter. Similar to the Vai and Gola tailor's apprenticeship in Liberia, West Africa (Lave, 1996), where the tailor apprentices crafted their identities in practices through their relationships with the masters, Katie too crafts her identity through her formal and informal engagement with the master Grainne.

It is evident from this research that Katie the newcomer gradually becomes more competent in a practice that is both meaningful and relevant to her - that of sport. The sports culture of Coláiste Fionn is a resource for her identity development.

6.2.4 Choosing an identity to grow by

Katie is the newcomer first year pupil. She has travelled from a different social and cultural space and desperately tries to navigate her way to a sense of belonging in this new world. She keenly observes the old timer, Gráinne and seeks to align her actions to this new community. Wenger (1998) uses the terms newcomer and old-timer to show how communities of practice deal with generational discontinuities through a social process of shared learning (Wenger, 1998, p.99). In Wenger's world of claims-processing, the learning of newcomers is a recognised activity. Because the company has an interest in maintaining the practice, it has put in place an official process of selection and training to ensure that new recruits are going to work as old-timers do. They create enough relationships with busy old-timers to gain access to the community and its practice (Wenger, 1998, p.100) There are several markers that newcomer teachers and students adopt in order to be teacherlike and student like. By mid-term break in Coláiste Fionn, Katie the newcomer pupil had adapted to the test environment of doing secondary school.

We had mid-term break last week so that was great because I was really tired getting up at half past 7 in the morning. I didn't fail my maths test! I actually got 89% in it!! I also got 90% in my English test on Goodnight Mister Tom, which was a really depressing book (Katie, November 2013).

Alice the newcomer teacher is concerned with getting it right as a new teacher in the school and classroom management is very important to her.

I had to deal with kinda behaviour that I wasn't used to dealing with from the last school I was in. So, while it was torture at times, it was a good experience as it toughened me up. I'm not taking things as personal as I used to last year which is a good thing going forward (Alice, May 2014).

This heightens their sense of belonging as legitimate participants in the lived-in world. Selves emerge and are fashioned through active membership of figured worlds. Sport is a very significant aspect of life in Coláiste Fionn and newcomers choosing sport as a salient identity to grow by provides a way in which some newcomers can gain a sense of place in a new school

community. Alice and Katie are agentive in the figured worlds they choose to be recruited into. Both Alice and Katie become active and passionate participants in the sporting world of Coláiste Fionn. This chapter serves to trace their membership of this figured world and how their identities are performed and lived in the everyday.

6.2.5 Sport a salient identity to grow by

The everyday, moment-to-moment encounters are the means by which people, learn, grow and transform themselves. Katie is similar to Daniel in Hall's work (2008). Daniel is figured by the world of the cool teenager (Holland and Lave, 20001; Holland et al, 1998) and this world grants him the semblance of a coherent identity. Daniel and his friends have picked socially acceptable ways to grow. I contend that Katie the first - year newcomer student to Coláiste Fionn invests in the figured world of sport and this research traces how Katie marks herself out as belonging to this figured world. Katie forms a relationship with a senior athlete in the school, Gráinne and this relationship is fundamental to Katie's negotiation of her evolving identity. Katie models Gráinne's sporting behaviours and this helps her become enmeshed in the figured world of sport in Coláiste Fionn. This figured world is the means through which she negotiates a new identity in the school. This valued identity is never finally won and requires constant endeavour as participation is dynamic and unpredictable. The first years' ability to sense their figured world becomes embodied over time, through continual participation. A frame becomes a world, a space, reproduced, formed and reformed in the practices of its participants. A figured world is formed and re-formed in relation to the everyday activities and events that ordain happenings within it. In the first-year corridor where they gather daily in the locker area there is much talk about sport. Gear bags, hurleys, helmets, footballs and chat about sporting events resound through the area. Katie as a first - year student is very involved in this world. She tells us in her diary entries that the first - year

lads have a soccer match and that she is going to cinema tomorrow after training for the Cork football team. She gets involved with the school's cross country running and is very keenly interested in a First-year sporty boy and his sporty prowess.

Cross Country today! We have to run 2km!!! Jack got with my best friend on Saturday, that made me sad...but I'm happy for him now! He's going to Cross Country too! He's really truly fast! Like ZOOM! We have a badminton tournament on next Wednesday!! Wahayy! # can't wait (Week 4, Katie, September 2013).

There is an air of excitement about this diary entry, the short sentences and Katie's effective use of exclamation marks serve to highlight her anticipation of the forthcoming school sporting events. Jack is a fellow first year and is also a very enthusiastic sportsman. Katie has always had an interest in Jack but has resigned herself to the fact that he is now with her best friend. She admires his speed and is secretly content that he is also going to the forthcoming cross - country event. Learning for Katie occurs through pupils like Jack. She needs and continues to need people like Jack around her in order to learn.

Katie attends the cross - country event and this is the first time she represents Coláiste Fionn in a sporting event. She is very proud to wear the school singlet and line up as a member of the first-year girl's team. Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities (Wenger, 1998, p.145). Katie's moment-by-moment experiences today do justice to the lived experience of identity while recognising it is the social, the cultural, the historical with a human face. Wenger feels that talking about identity in social terms is not denying the individuality of the person. Katie's individuality is part of a specific athletic community in Coláiste Fionn. There is a mutual constitution between the individual and the collective (Wenger, 1998, p.146). Every act of participation or reification from the most public like today's school event to the most private like Katie's reflections on today's event, reflect this mutual constitution between the individual and the collective. Katie's practices, language, artefacts, reflect her social relations. Her private thoughts make use of concepts, images and perspectives that she understands through her participation in this

community. She comes home a very credible 16th out of a field of 100 first year girls. She goes home with a Gold team medal and is happy that Coláiste Fionn has enough school points to bring home the shield for the best girl's school in cross country for this event. Gráinne, the 5th year senior Athlete that mentors the school athletes is a very accomplished athlete. She is an old timer in Coláiste Fionn and has navigated her way from one of the pre- amalgamated schools. Wenger describes a community of practice as a field of possible pasts and of possible futures. Gráinne as an old-timer delivers the past and offers the future in the form of participation. She has made an investment in her practice, embroiled in the politics of her community and with the confidence derived from participation in a history she knows well. She welcomes Katie and new potentials afforded by new generations who are less hostage to the past. Gráinne is thrilled with the excellent sporting facilities in the new school as she only had a court in her former school.

The biggest change was the better sports facilities because the hall here is amazing and the gym is brilliant. It really helped with the athletics. I found I was going to the gym once a week and I got stronger and I could feel it when I was running (Gráinne, May 2014).

Gráinne inspires Junior Athletes:

In the Aviva Munster school's Cross-Country Championships that took place on the grounds of Cork IT, Gráinne was the happiest winner of the day. She took the Senior Girls 2500m Title in brilliant style. She was third in the Intermediate race last year and second in the recent South Munster's, but today was her day when she ran a good race. The 17-year-old moved up from third to first over the final lap to win by seven seconds. Gráinne was interviewed by a sports journalist on conclusion of the race and said:

I just had that extra bit in my legs coming up that last hill, so I'm delighted to win. I felt much better today than the South Munster's as I was suffering from a stomach bug (Southern Star, February 22nd, 2014).

Gráinne was described as the happiest winner of the day in the sports journal article written by John Walshe titled- *Gráinne races to senior girls' title at Munster cross-country finals.*

However, probably the happiest winner of the day was Gráinne Murphy of Coláiste Fionn, who took the senior girls' title in brilliant style. Third last year in the intermediate race, Gráinne had finished second in the recent South Munsters but running a very sensible race the 17-year-old moved up from third to first over the final lap to win by seven seconds from Eileen Rafter of Ursuline, Thurles (Souther Star, February 22nd, 2014).

Gráinne exhibits the characteristics of a powerful agent as she races to cross country glory.

She runs for all the Coláiste Fionn athletes to see just how masterful she can be on the field.

It is this action of “doing running” in a historical and social context that gives a structure and meaning to Gráinne’s actions. These practices all signify a kind of community, a community of practice. This group of athletes from Coláiste Fionn organise and co-ordinate their activities like the day out at the Munsters Cross Country. Their mutual relationships entwine as they interpret the world. Gráinne’s practices include both the explicit and the tacit, it includes what is said and what is left unsaid. It incorporates bespoke moments off the school campus on days out like this as well as the more mundane school training sessions.

Gráinne helps with the lunchtime training sessions on the pitch with the school athletes. This involves doing a warm up and a fifteen-minute training session, followed by some cooling down exercises. She encourages the Junior athletes to practice between the sessions and she helps the teachers organising athletics events to gather names and promote the events within the school. The junior athletes associate athletics with her. Katie often meets Gráinne in the school corridor and Gráinne would always talk to her and remind her about the forthcoming event and training session. Rogoff’s (1995) socio-cultural approach to development is helpful in interpreting the newcomer- old-timer relationship that exists between Gráinne and Katie. Rogoff conceives of participation in communities as occurring across three interlinked and interdependent planes: apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation. Central to her theory is that learning and participation occur simultaneously on all three planes as they are mutually constituting (Rogoff, 1995, p.141). Rogoff’s apprenticeship metaphor focuses our attention on the active roles of newcomers and others in arranging activities and

support for developing participation, as well as the cultural and institutional practices and goals of the activities to which they contribute. Rogoff's metaphor supports the mutual embeddedness of the individual and the socio-cultural world. Gráinne is very active in supporting Katie as her apprentice in athletics. Her guided participation in the events of every - day life, conversations, communications, interactions, joint participations allows Katie to participate as well as actively observe. Rogoff's final plane, participatory appropriation, refers to how individuals like Gráinne transform their understandings of and responsibility for activities through their own participation. Rogoff contends that individuals like Gráinne change and becomes capable of engaging later in similar activities through participation. As a new member of a community Katie, just like the Girl Scouts (Rogoff, 1995), is active in her attempt to make sense of the activities going on around her. Both Gráinne and Katie are agents in the athletics activities in the world of the school. Hence through their participation they are transformed.

Gráinne is happy to help out with athletics and she is able to put the work into her Gaisce project.

For the Cross-Country season, we organised trainings at lunchtime. So basically, we just got anyone that was interested in participating in cross country to get some level of fitness built up for the West Cork Secondary School's competition and then for the South Munster's and the Munster's. We got them just doing a warm up training. We kinda push them hard for 15-20 minutes so that they get a good bit of training out of it. But I found it really rewarding because it was easy to see the ones that were coming to the training. You could see it in the races that they were that bit better than they would have been doing, so that was really good to see (Gráinne, May 2014).

Gráinne plays a very important role for the newcomers like Katie as they try to forge their own identities. They too must find a place in relation to the past. In order for them to participate, they must gain access to the history they want to contribute to. They must make it part of their own identities (Wenger, 1998, p.157). Gráinne helps them on their path.

Gráinne main sporting interest is athletics but she has accomplished herself in the field of Gaelic football at county level. We engage in different practices in each of the communities of practice to which we belong. We often behave rather differently in each of them, construct different aspects of ourselves, and gain different perspectives (Wenger, 1998, p.159). This year has been particularly colourful for Gráinne, having had the honour of representing her country at international level and also competing at All Ireland School's level.

I'm big into athletics, so this year has been very successful. Last June after the Irish schools I was selected on the Irish Team on the 3000m. I represented Ireland at an SAIB International in Dublin where I came 6th in the 3000m in a PB. When the Cross-Country season started, I had top 10 finishes in both the clubs All Irelands and I came 6th in the Irish Schools. I recently won the 3000m at the South Munster's Track and Field. At the start of the year I made the Cork Minor football team, so I was forced to commit to football more this year. I was happy to break a bit from running for the football. We train twice a week, Wednesday's and Saturday's in Cork. There are two other girls, so we share lifts. We beat Clare in the first round and went on to beat Waterford in the second round. We beat Tipp in the Munster Final, so we have our All-Ireland Semi-Final on July 19th against Cavan (Gráinne, May 2014).

Her commitment to sport inside and outside the school is notable.

I trained the First-year basketball team as well. They reached the county semi-final, so that was great to be involved in that and seeing the athletes who had been doing the training do so well in competitions and keeping up their enthusiasm for it. It's great to see (Gráinne, May 2014).

Gráinne's identity inherits the texture of her sporting practices. Our identities are rich and complex because they are produced within a rich and complex set of relations of practice (Wenger, 1998, p.162). Identity is becoming as it is ongoing and pervasive. It is negotiated between members in communities like the athletes in Coláiste Fionn. This community membership gives the formation of identity a fundamentally social character. Our membership manifests itself in the familiarity we experience within certain social contexts (Wenger, 1998, p.163). This is evidenced through events like an outing to a school's cross- country event. An identity is a trajectory in time that incorporates both past and future into the meaning of the present. Gráinne's past sporting history in the pre-amalgamated school is enmeshed with the

future to give meaning to the present. In a similar manner Katie incorporates her past history of participation in sport from primary school and the future into the experience of the present.

6.2.6 Figured Worlds gather Katie up: Do you wanna do laps?

Many of the activities that engage human energy and interest have an imaginary component. These imaginary or “as if” worlds rest upon people’s abilities to form and be formed in collectively realised “as if” realms. Holland et al describe figured worlds as places where people have the propensity to be drawn to, recruited for, and formed in these worlds, and to become active in and passionate about them (Holland et al, 1998, p.49). This is certainly borne out by Katie in my research. She is drawn to, recruited for and formed in the figured world of sport in Coláiste Fionn.

In the winter time the pitch is out of bounds for students during break time. Katie enjoys doing laps of the school with her friends. They circle the school and the car park areas many times. The practice of lapping emerged many times in the research as a dominant activity in Coláiste Fionn. Another Junior Cycle student Leah explains how she passes time in the school.

I go for laps at lunch break,
When asked where she replies,

HA HA, outside, HA HA.

The lapping of the school by pupils at break and lunchtime is noted as a significant activity having a health benefit. The staff organisers of the Health Promoting School awareness week that took place in Coláiste Fionn from February 3rd - February 7th 2014 included the Laps theme in their schedule of lunchtime activities. An email circulated to staff by Aoife the health promoting school co-ordinator tries to encourage staff involvement:

Dear Colleague,

As part of the HPS campaign to making all the school community aware of our participation in the Health Promoting School project, a fancy - dress competition has been arranged for next Friday 7th of Feb. the aim of this is for everyone to have a laugh but more importantly to make people realise that a healthy school is more than just about eating well & keeping fit but also about feeling happy & having fun!

Prizes include a €50 cash prize & a week long holiday from school*

Please find details attached.

Thanks for your participation!

Aoife

HPS co-ordinator

*Week from 15 to 22 of feb 2014 inclusive only (email, January 29th, 2014).

Table 6C: Physical Health

Monday Feb 3rd	Tuesday 4th	Wednesday 5th	Thursday 6th	Friday 7th
Do a lunch lap*1:15 to 1:25 3rd year students and teachers *10 - minute walk around the school <u>OR IF RAINING</u> Climb and descend the internal Fire Exit stairs from L0 to L2 twice! 84 steps = 66 kcals)	Lunch Lap 1:15 to 1:25 2nd yr. Teachers & Students	Lunch Lap 1:15 to 1:25 1st yr. Teachers & Students Nutrition talk with Rachel & Hannah Dare of Organico, for 5th year students	Lunch Lap 1:15 to 1:25 6th yr. Teachers & Students Lunch time Zumba Where: P.E Hall When: 1:30 to 1:55 Open to all €1 charge.	Lunch Lap 1:15 to 1:25 TY & 5th yr. Teachers & Students
Inter-PE class league 4 events challenge-Junior & Senior	Inter-PE class league 4 events challenge-Junior & Senior	Inter-PE class league 4 events challenge-Junior & Senior	Inter-PE class league 4 events challenge-Junior & Senior	Inter-PE class league 4 events challenge-Junior & Senior Winners announced

The Lunch Lap is incorporated in the physical health component of the Health Promoting School campaign and the lap is defined as a 10 - minute walk around the school. All of the school's year groups are invited to participate over the course of the week and the lunch time

lap is deemed possible for all members of the school community – both staff and students.

This lapping time is a great opportunity for both students and staff of Coláiste Fionn to mould their identities in a simple social space.

Katie gets involved in other sports like Tag Rugby, Badminton and Gaelic football.

This week the girls tag rugby training started up on Tuesday, it was on at big lunch and we were trained by Ms. O’Sullivan and Ms. McCarthy. We just did some passing in lines and working on trying to do it backwards. In the end, we have a little 5-minute game to put our passing into practice (Katie, November 2013).

Katie negotiates a new identity through her involvement in sport. Her transformation takes place through the lived day-to-day encounters in the corridors, the school PE Hall, the Pitch, and sports related outings. She learns to let go of the old identity of being a Primary School pupil. She has learned to take responsibility for her sports schedule, locker and timetable. Despite being fearful of what lay ahead of her in September, by May she has become embedded in this new world. She writes about how her school football mentors have organised an end of year party for the football players. They are rewarded with treats and the opportunity to reflect on the times past. They are given status by the experience and look forward to what is yet to come.

We had a party yesterday for all those who played U16 and Senior football during the year. They showed some clips of the games and the interviews of us afterwards, it was hilarious and lots of sweets too so YUM (Katie, May 2014).

6.2.7 Favourite Place in the school
Figure 6A: A sporty space -The Pitch



Katie's favourite place in the school is the Pitch. She enjoys socialising with her friends on the side-lines. She loves when her class is taken to play soccer at the end of the school year, by subject teachers and not just during PE class. That is a real treat and she plays against the boys, especially Jack. She is one of the sportiest girls in her class and she could even score a goal against some of her male classmates.

Wenger (1998), argues that learning occurs socially as the meanings of what we do are always social. The practices in which we find meaning become the practices in which we invest our identities that we share with others in the same community of practice. He defines participation as the process of taking part in the world. Reification is how we impress our meanings onto the world, and then on meeting them again, perceive them existing as external facts. Both participation and reification are complementary processes and form a unity in their duality. The pitch in Coláiste Fionn reifies the sporting world for Katie, hence it is her favourite place. Reification shapes her experience of living in the sporting world of the school. Having a tool to perform an activity changes the nature of that activity (Wenger, 1998, p.59). The existence of the pitch changes Katie's experience of the sporting world in the school by focusing her attention in a particular way and enabling new kinds of understanding. There is a concrete bank on one side of the pitch allowing students to gather and oversee pitch activities. The pitch is a ground where play, fun and new meanings are negotiated. The negotiation of meaning weaves participation and reification so seamlessly that meaning seems to have its own unitary, self-contained existence (Wenger, 1998, p.63). It is this negotiation of meaning that takes place on the pitch, through the interplay of participation and reification that makes people like Katie and things like the pitch what they are. Our experience and our world shape each other. The world as we shape it, and our experience as the world shapes it, are like the mountain and the river. They shape each other, but they have their own shape (Wenger, 1998, p.71). They fit around each other, but they

remain distinct from each other. They cannot be transformed into each other, yet they transform each other. The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interaction, the carving becomes the guiding and the guiding becomes the carving. The acknowledgment by Katie that the school pitch is her favourite spot in the school is an important finding as it further confirms the significance of sport in Katie's world and its role in shaping her unfolding identity as a first year pupil in Coláiste Fionn. In the next section of this chapter I will examine my findings of when the first years are asked to draft a poster illustrating some of the main highlights of their year.

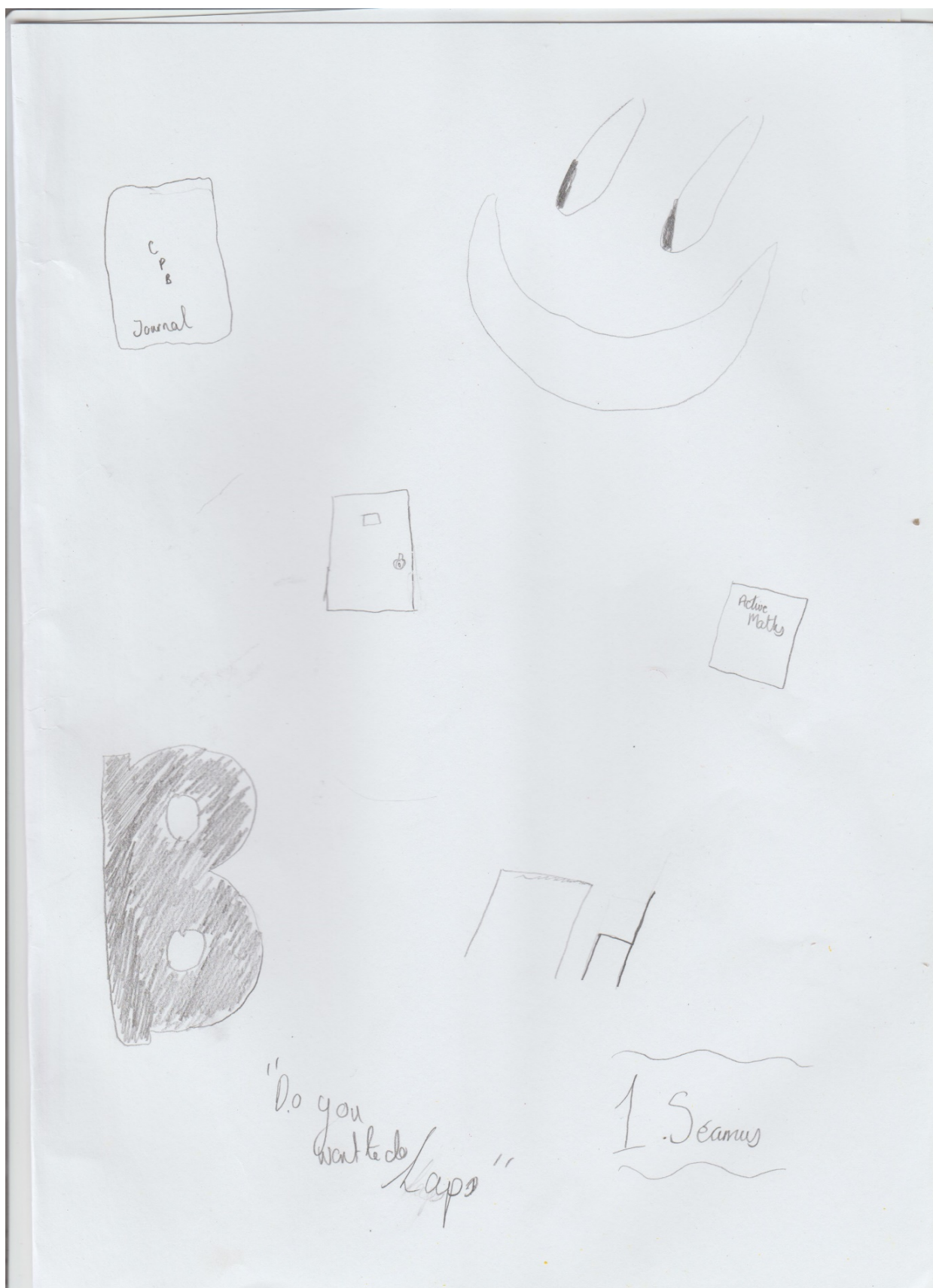


Figure 6B: Katie draws images of her first year in Coláiste Fionn

This poster summarising first year life for Katie also illuminates some of the important aspects of school life for Katie. The phrase “do you wanna do laps”? is given status as a significant part of the year’s activities. The action of doing laps around the school is an act of participation as well as reification. Wenger tells us that most human activities produce marks in the physical world. These marks are vestiges. They freeze fleeting moments of engagement in practice into monuments, which persist and disappear in their own time (Wenger, 1998:60). Their character as reification is not only in their form but also in the processes by which they are integrated into these practices. Katie participates with her fellow pupils in the act of simply walking around the school grounds in a lap like fashion. This is one of the main lunch time rituals that students participate in to kill time in Coláiste Fionn. They circle the carpark area and the courts, chatting with their friends and eating their lunch. It is a means through which they gain a sense of place and belonging in the school. The pupils’ engagement in doing laps is an example of informal sport in the school. It is a means through which students grow and develop their identities through the every-day informal social interactions. It is also notable that Katie includes others markers of pupil Dom that she deems significant. These include the school journal which is an important passport in Coláiste Fionn. Students are to have this with them at all times and it is a means of communicating between home and school. The inclusion of the locker door in Katie’s poster reifies the locker as a significant aspect of her participation in the school. Students are allowed access their lockers at set times, particularly before school starts in the morning, at morning break and restricted lunchtime times. The first-years congregate in the area around their lockers and it is the hub of social interaction for the year group. Katie includes a desk and chair as well as a drawing of her maths textbook. These are synonymous with student life in the school and again reify Katie’s continual participation in the student life of the school.

Identities trace our participation in activities. Identities are meaningless in the absence of participation. Gráinne and Katie have found a salient identity by which they can negotiate their way in Coláiste Fionn. Gráinne has come from one of the former pre-amalgamated schools and is overwhelmed by the new sports facilities. These facilities help her reach great heights in the sporting world. Katie is mentored by Gráinne and agentively evolves the sporting identity and makes it dominant and central to the display of self. She sacrifices other ways to grow and live a life in Colaiste Fionn. There is an opportunity cost for Katie and Gráinne of investing themselves in the sporting identity. In Hall's work (2008) Daniel finds a salient identity by which he could negotiate his way out of childhood and into teen-hood. He sacrificed other ways to grow and live a life. Likewise, Gráinne and Katie agentively evolve a sporting identity at the expense perhaps of a musical identity. This identity is occasioned in the everyday moment-by-moment encounters. It is through these encounters that they learn, grow and transform themselves. Gráinne and Katie's identity are jointly constructed and can only be given legitimacy in interaction with others. The self is ever relational and dynamic: it is socially distributed and can never be possessed by an individual (Hall, 2008). Both Gráinne and Katie put a huge effort into maintaining this sporting identity. Meaningfulness is central to espousing an identity. They both engage in sporty pursuits that are personally meaningful to them. They are highly relevant to the desirable self that they strive to enact. Sporty pursuits are mediational means (Wertsch, 1991) by which Katie leaves the primary school setting behind and moves into being a secondary school adolescent. It is also the means through which Gráinne can settle and grow in this newly amalgamated school setting. This is why Gráinne and Katie choose this identity to grow by. They have developed a certain amount of expertise in this world and find it motivating. It is personally meaningful for them and they feel valued in this place. In the process, they position themselves and are

positioned by others as the *sporty spices* of the school. Hence, I can conclude in this first section of the Chapter that identity is evidently negotiated through sport. We have witnessed the fluidity of identity as both Katie and Gráinne flourish in their new surroundings. The next section of this Chapter will extend the emergent and relational nature of identity when I explore how a newcomer teacher Alice's identity develops through sport in Coláiste Fionn.

Vignette 5

6.3 Alice and Sport

Week 1: September 2013

Alice volunteers to coach badminton on Mondays after school for an hour. There are lots of sports pursued in the school and help is always needed from staff members in this area. She enjoys the interaction with the students and it's a great way to get to know them better outside of the classroom.

Week 28: May 2014

In the final school term Alice arranges a golf scramble for junior students. Golf is Alice's passion and she would like to develop this minority sport in the school. This proved a very positive experience for Alice and she got about 15 students involved. She enlisted the support of the juvenile officer of the local golf club and the help of two other female staff members who volunteered to help her. The experience was challenging for Alice as it was very difficult to communicate with students about the event. She tried to make announcements on the school intercom but not all students would hear these. She resorted to putting up posters but students didn't notice these. She found the face-to-face, calling to classrooms one of the best means of communicating with the student cohort.

6.3.1 Figured Worlds: A space for Alice to belong

People have the propensity to be drawn to, recruited for, and formed in these worlds, and to become active in and passionate about them (Holland et al., 1998, p.49).

Dorothy Holland uses figured worlds to capture the relation between the personal world of the individual and the wider world of social relations. She explains the notion of a figured world by asking the reader to imagine a world called academia, where books were so significant that people would sit for hours on end, away from friends and family, writing them. In a similar manner Colaiste Fionn can be viewed as a place where sport is of great importance. The figured world of sport are “as if” worlds, where individuals like Alice and Katie may appropriate or are recruited into and which are then reproduced and developed through the practices that they engage in. This figured world is populated by the characters and types who carry out its business and who have ways of interacting within it as well as orientations towards it, be it on the playing fields, basketball courts or gymnasium. The figured world of sport that engulfs both Alice and Katie are central to the kinds of people they are or could become. They can of course inhabit more than one figured world. Some figured worlds may be denied to them, whilst they may deny some to others. Hence some may be missed by accident and others, like the figured world of sport, learnt fully (Holland et al., 1998, p.41).

Alice negotiates her way in Coláiste Fionn through getting involved in sporting activities in the school. She is desperate to belong in this newly found space and realises that helping out in extra-curricular activities like school sporting activities is an ideal means to do this. The figured world of sport is a meaning system that mediates her behaviour. She soon adopts the identity of the sporty teacher and in so doing develops a productive relationship with school management, fellow colleagues and pupils. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998, 2008) describe how learning involves absorbing and being absorbed by the culture of the

practice in question. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation describes how newcomers are enabled to participate in what is important, and through their participation become full and central participants in the valued practice. One of the valued practices of Colaiste Fionn is the investment in sport. Alice through her involvement in school badminton and organising the golf scramble absorbs and is absorbed by the culture of the school. Alice finds herself engaging with school management in order to get permission to run the Golf Scramble. This means she has to have a face -to -face meeting with both the school Principal and the Deputy Principal. She has to outline her idea and how she plans to organise the activity. She has to have a clear plan of action as they will not be convinced that it will work out. When she receives the formal go ahead the activity must be pencilled into the school calendar. Alice personally approaches a few colleagues about helping her with the activity.

There were 15 students, it was in the local golf club and I got the help of the Juvenile Officer for girls in the club. I got 2 other female teachers, who volunteered as well to come out with me (Alice, May 2014).

She has to email the entire staff about the logistics of the event. She finds herself using the school Public Address system to make announcements regarding the event and also visiting classrooms in person. She gets first- hand knowledge of how the practice of organising any event in Colaiste Fionn is expected to be carried out.

It was ok except for trying to get announcements made, that was a bit of an issue, so I had to use posters, but students didn't notice the posters so that was also a bit of an ordeal (Alice, May 2014).

Peripherality implies some degree of limited or even non-participation, but Alice's trajectory is still in-bound towards central participation. Her participation is nested in the day-to-day routines and taken-for-granted practices in the school.

Alice negotiates a new Identity and meaning through her involvement in developing the minority sport of Golf in the school. The experience yields a productive relationship between Alice, her colleagues and pupils. They extend to Alice a position of belonging. She has become a member of a community of practice. Dorothy Holland et al (1998) and Stanton Wortham (2006) describe how identities thicken over time and events. This can be vividly seen over the progression of the academic year, from the time Alice shyly stood up at that very first staff meeting to introduce herself and the closing events of the school year. She has used a sporting activity that was personally meaningful to her since her childhood to thicken her identity in Coláiste Fionn. When Alice is asked about the most memorable aspect of the year, she spent in Coláiste Fionn, she replies:

The most memorable part, I suppose was the golf scramble. It was a very positive experience and the students seemed to really enjoy it (Alice, May 2014).

Through her engagement in the day-to-day routine practices, she ensured her sense of herself and others' sense of her as belonging to the community of Coláiste Fionn is consolidated.

Alice's engagement in routine everyday practices is enabled by the mediational tools of this world. Just like the ball of masking tape that facilitates the bowl-ing along the second-year corridor the sporty reifications of badminton racquets and golf balls allow Alice to bridge the gap from the old world to the new.

Selves emerge and are fashioned through active membership of figured worlds. Sport is a very significant aspect of life in Coláiste Fionn and choosing sport as a salient identity to grow by newcomers to the school proves a way in which some newcomers can gain a sense of place in a new school community. Alice is agentive in the figured world she chooses to be recruited into. Alice becomes an active and passionate participant in the sporting world of Coláiste Fionn. Sport is a means through which Alice negotiates her new identity as a teacher. This is aided by the mediational tools that help her act and perform a self. I will now discuss these shaping resources in further detail.

6.3.2 Mediational tools

Mediated action is about how a person's actions and interactions are accomplished by the use of cultural tools and reifications, the shaping resources for acting or performing the self.

There are of course the standard reifications of textbooks, timetables and syllabi, but Alice chooses to incorporate the sporty reifications into her practice. It is in this working out, there lies the space for the emergence of her identity and the authoring of a self. There is a dualistic relationship between participation and reification. Both are needed for the negotiation of meaning. Alice uses the cultural artefacts of the badminton racquet and the golf club. Her choice of tools and how they are appropriated are significant in terms of Alice's identity formation. These mediational means are acquired through experience, in participation and engagement with others. Alice and the tools that she uses as mediational means are enmeshed. They are constitutive and inseparable from each other. They are the means through which she carves out her sporting identity in Coláiste Fionn.

6.3.3 Etching out a liv-able identity

In a complex world in which we must find a liv-able identity, ignorance is never simply ignorance, and knowing is not just a matter of information. In practice, understanding is always straddling the known and the unknown in a subtle dance of the self. It is a delicate balance. Whoever we are understanding in practice is the art of choosing what to know and what to ignore in order to proceed with our lives (Wenger, 1998, p.41).

Newcomers like Alice have a good idea of what old-timers consider a good way to be in the practice. This is after all Alice's second year teaching following her completion of the PGDE. Alice seeks to align both her actions and thinking with her new community and so experience a sense of belonging and being a legitimate participant. Wenger talks about the delicate balance and the dance of the self that is involved in straddling the known and the unknown. He states that wherever we are, understanding in practice is the art of choosing what to know and what to ignore in order to proceed with our lives. We can see from Alice's

vignette that she certainly pays attention to the sporting genres of Coláiste Fionn and it quickly becomes a means by which she can participate fully in this newfound school community. She is able to participate in the shared practice of organising sporting activities. Wenger argues that this participation is enabled when there is an experience of mutuality and the mutual ability to negotiate meaning. This occurs for Alice as she works alongside colleagues on the day of the golf scramble and as she instructs junior golfers on how to play the game. More experienced colleagues open up the practice for newcomers like Alice by involving them in joint activity. They facilitate Alice's subtle dance of the self.

I can conclude this second section of the chapter having presented findings that collude with those of section 1 when we evidenced Katie's sporting identity flourishing in practice. The figured world of sport engulfs both Katie and Alice and helps them etch out a liveable identity. In the final section of this chapter, I will examine further live scenes from the corridors of Coláiste Fionn for evidence of the negotiation of identities through sport in other pupils in the school.

6.4 A rich tapestry of sporting life in the Second-Year corridor

Road Bowling

In this section of the Chapter I will present findings from my ethnographic research which is confirmed by findings from my focus group research. Holland et al describe a figured world as a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. This is true in the second-year corridor as imaginary play is engaged in. Sport is very much alive in informal spaces like the second-year locker area. It is a fertile ground for identity formation. The lived culture of Colaiste Fionn is both audible and visible.

These lads are not allowed play ball or toss a slotar in this pristine indoor space. Order is policed. They have developed their own sport amusements to kill the minutes before the sound of the next bell.

Making something out of nothing at all

The second - year boys are observed playing a game of toss the coin. When asked what they are up to, one explains that they take turns tossing a coin against the wall and who ever manages to get it closest to the wall without touching it is the winner. The following extract from a focus group session with these second - year boys vividly depicts the ebbs and flows of life on the second - year corridor.

Table 6D: Excerpt from focus group with second year boys

I	You might tell me how you spend time on the Second-Year Corridor?
Chorus of Voices	Road Bowling is great craic! We sit down on the rad-ia-tors. We talk about the farm-ing and the calves and the cows.
I	What kind of games are played?
Timmy	Hitting Joey Murphy. It's a tradition, we had our 3rd annual hitting Joey Day!
Mickey	Bowl-ing the masking tape balls on the corridor, throwing them down the hall.
Timmy	The coin game, yes, throwing the coins against the wall.

I	Tell me about the coin game?
Mickey	Spinning the corks of the milk bottles, throwing them down into the bin like Frisbees!

6.4.1 A figured world played out, a field of possibilities

This snippet of life shows us that play and sport is very much alive in informal spaces. The lads have created their own means of sporting fun. Aligning with the Deputy Principal's observation that students often gather in the corridors at break times on the basis of their interests we see first - hand sport in action.

I notice that kids coming in now, they mingle more easily with each other, gender wise, age wise. They are not as clanish as they would have been. There is an intermingling of students across the school. You do get at lunchtimes mixtures of kids with common interests, certain identity groups (Deputy Principal, June 2014).

This is visible as some second years gather in the corridor and depicts how the road bowling culture of West Cork has been inculcated into the lived culture of Coláiste Fionn. Road bowling is one of those sporting gems that is practiced in the heart of the West Cork countryside. It is played with a solid iron ball. Two contestants match their individual skills in throwing the bowl with optimum speed and controlled delivery. The winner is the player to reach the finishing line in the least number of throws or shots. Just like rounding a bend on the road in the heart of West Cork on a Sunday afternoon, when a group of people have seemingly taken over the road, we see that the second - year pupils have populated the second - year corridor to emulate such practices. The masking tape from tech graph has been transformed into a ball and the milk caps from the school's School Completion Programme are used as Frisbees. The lads loft the man-made masking tape balls in a similar manner to lofting the bowl. The milk caps are tossed like frisbees to see who will get it into the bin first. They also throw

coins and see who can get the coin to land nearest to the wall. Vygotsky (1978) gave central place to collectively developed signs and symbols as the media by which children's mental and emotional faculties were culturally formed. Vygotsky speaks of a "pivot", a mediating or symbolic device. In the corridors of Colaiste Fionn the second - year pupils shift themselves to a conceptual world beyond their immediate surroundings in order to become actors who submit to the games premises and treat its events as real. This figured world of sport is peopled by the figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it (Holland et al, 1998, p.51). The ability to sense the figured world becomes embodied over time, through continual participation. A figured world is formed and reformed in relation to the everyday activities and events that ordain happenings within it (Holland et al, 1998, p.53) The second-year boys through engaging in practice with others, in living culturally, they negotiate new ways of being in that culture. They produce, reproduce and transform the culture as well as engaging in it. They hold an informal score or bowl-ing match and are watched by the dozens of other second-year spectators on the corridor. The sporting identity emerges as the culture unfolds. It is in this space that students are both made and unmade by each other (Lawler, 2008, p.149). The students become who they are because of their social interactions and who they engage with in these every-day informal social actions. This is evidenced also by findings in Chapter 7. Just as they become who they are through their interactions with other people, they also discover who they are not. They find their own niche in the rich social tapestry of this place. They are attracted in an equally passionate manner to play the bowl-ing ritual as their fathers and grandfathers have before them. Coláiste Fionn is an active site for new kinds of participation opportunities for students. This is a very important finding in understanding how identities are negotiated through sport. Finally, I will outline evidence that

challenges the positive role that participation in Physical Education plays in the life of Coláiste Fionn students.

6.4.2 Challenge of Physical Education as a positive participation space

6.4.2 Challenges of PE as a positive participation space:

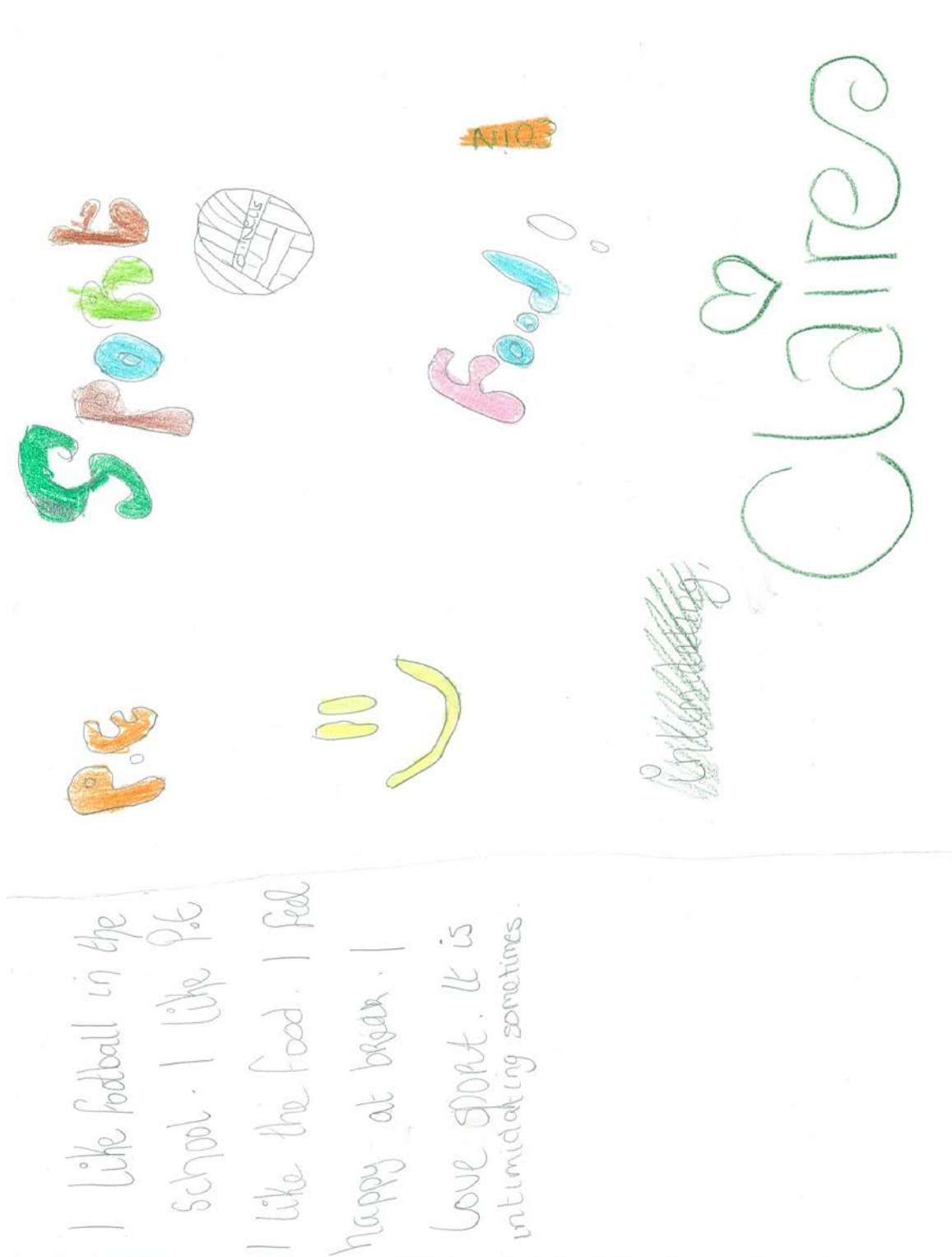


Figure 6C: Summary of First Year student's life in Coláiste Fionn

Sport from a sociocultural perspective is central to learning and identity building. Teaching and learning spaces that integrate a sociocultural perspective legitimate and value student view thus facilitate the production of body knowledge around complex social justice issues of race, gender and social class. Despite the positive aspects of student participation in sport outlined in Coláiste Fionn, the following student data analysis for this study revealed four key themes around student participation in PE:

1. The intimidating aspects of PE
2. The gendered nature of PE
3. The competitive aspects of PE
4. Lack of Student Participation

The intimidating aspects of PE:

The above poster created by a first - year pupil to summarise her year in Coláiste Fionn highlighted her love of sport but also the fact that it can be intimidating. This theme of intimidation was evident in student comments pertaining to the practice of PE classes doing the beep test. Students expressed how intimidating the Beep test was as it singled out their lack of physical fitness. The following comments from students reflect this.

Beep test in first year puts people on the spot and makes it obvious who is not fit (Ellen, May 2014).

I didn't really enjoy PE. I often found it quite embarrassing if you couldn't keep up with everyone else. The worst thing was the Beep test! This was humiliating when you got sent off for missing the beep (Joe, May 2014).

I think it was very unfair publicly ranking everyone's fitness abilities and was humiliating for the people who weren't as fit as others. Also, in my PE class one girl fainted during the beep test due to the vigorous exercise (John, May 2014).

The beep test was awful because you could see the competition between the extremely fit and sporty people and the less athletic people tried to do their best but their efforts weren't awarded because the main focus was on who "won". To avoid the humiliation of not reaching a certain score, myself and a couple of friends would drop at the same score so that we would have the excuse of, "Oh, I wasn't trying anyway". This meant that the scores were completely inaccurate because of the embarrassing circumstances (Lisa, May 2014).

It is clear from the above student responses that the beep test was not a positive aspect of student participation in PE. The beep test involved continuous running between two lines 20m apart in time to recorded beeps. For this reason, the test is also often called the 'beep' or 'bleep' test. The participants stand behind one of the lines facing the second line, and begin running when instructed by the recording. The speed at the start is quite slow. The subject continues running between the two lines, turning when signalled by the recorded beeps. After about one minute, a sound indicates an increase in speed, and the beeps will be closer together. This continues each minute (level). If the line is reached before the beep sounds, the subject must wait until the beep sounds before continuing. If the line is not reached before the beep sounds, the subject is given a warning and must continue to run to the line, then turn and try to catch up with the pace within two more "beeps". The subject is given a warning the first time they fail to reach the line (within 2 meters), and eliminated after the second warning. It is evident from the student comments that the practice of the beep test was a humiliating experience and whilst a small minority of competitive sporty students benefited from it the majority of the student cohort did not.

The gendered nature of PE:

There was a strong sense that boys were more valued than girls in PE. The boys and girls were divided up and different activities arranged for both groups. This led to girls feeling that boys could only be successful in sport.

PE classes were split between boys and girls. It was more fun when it was mixed (Ellen, May 2014).

I felt that the boys were prioritised in PE (Sally, May 2014).

Stigma around girls playing sports, not as many opportunities available for girls sporting careers as boys who have many sporting opportunities (Rose, May 2014).

In *Sociocultural Issues in Physical Education*, Flory et al, contend that teachers and educators must care about girls having positive experiences. Gender still matters in PE (Scraton, 2013), not only for matters of inclusion and equity but because a gender focus in PE supports young people's making sense of bodies and identities (Garrett, 2004). Hence, the inclusion of girls in PE should be a priority for Coláiste Fionn.

The competitive aspects of PE:

Another dominant theme was the competitive nature of PE.

From a young age the so called "worse players" are excluded more when it comes to competitive winning and may go many games with only 10 minutes of playing time. This could destroy a young child's confidence and cause them to quit. Coaches should treat all as equal and even try develop the worse players into becoming better and try and boost their self- ego and confidence (Jake, May 2014).

Playing a sport that you're not good at but other people play professionally can be very embarrassing, because you may feel your letting your team down (Ryan, May 2014).

Not enough of fun games, all games are based on competitive sports, where only one is a winner (Luke, May 2014).

People who aren't on the team clubs feel they can't join the school teams (Brian, May 2014).

Hence in this study there was a strong desire to experience the fun aspects of PE, aligning with the findings of *What young people say about physical activity: The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA)*. This study was undertaken by three Irish institutions, Dublin City University, University of Limerick and University College Cork.

The study assessed participation in physical activity, physical education and sport (PAPES) among 10-18year olds in Ireland. Experiencing fun was a key theme identified. The two main reasons cited by boys and girls for participating in sport in the study were fun and competition. Enjoyment and pleasure were key for all youth in choosing to take part in PA. These findings link well with other studies from around the world (Jones & Cheetham, 2001; Lake, 2001b; O'Sullivan, 2002; Macdonald et al, 2005; Dyson, 2006; Smith & Parr (2007) participation in physical education is perceived by pupils as a break from the rest of school for non-serious, non-academic socialising that is about fun and enjoyment. In Coláiste Fionn students perceive PE as a space for fun and would like to experience this side of PE more.

Lack of student participation:

The final theme identified was lack of student participation particularly as the students moved from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle.

In my five years of school from 1st year to 3rd year everyone always had gear for PE. But from 5th -6th a few people are only toggged off in my class which shows that as you get older you have less interest in physical education (John, May 2014).

Each week there's different groups of people that never bring PE gear or participate (Laura, May 2014).

The decline in sports participation may be reversed if students were given a choice in the activities. Choice was a big facet in leading to greater levels of engagement by girls in PE (Flory, 2014, p.45). in other words, choice in terms of activity, clothing, and their form of engagement would lead girls to value PE as a subject. This choice would make the provision of PE more student centred and over the focus of learning from the teacher toward the students. It would prevent students making the following comments:

Not having a great variety of PE games can make it boring (Jack, May 2014).

No diversity in PE. It's either soccer every week or the gym if it's raining (Oliver, May 2014).

Lack of different activities, doing the same few sporty activities every week and every year (Jane, May 2014).

The decline in student participation in PE from Junior to Senior Cycle is a notable cause for concern. The benefit derived from participation is highlighted in the study, *School Sport and Academic Achievement*. It investigated how participation in school sport influences the Leaving Certificate points score in an Irish Secondary School. In particular, the study investigated how the particular sport chosen by students participating in school sport during their Leaving Certificate years influences their Leaving Certificate results. The Leaving Certificate scores and sports participation of 402 boys graduating from a secondary school in Ireland during 2008-2011 were recorded. The study concluded that promoting participation in school sport and providing access to a range of team and individual sports throughout the secondary school years may be a beneficial way to improve students' Leaving Certificate results.

Our study suggests that participating in extra-curricular school sport whilst studying for Leaving Certificate secondary school-leaver examinations can benefit academic achievement. Furthermore, our results suggest that participating in individual sports confers a further benefit to academic results because of the enhanced positive personality characteristics of conscientiousness and autonomy associated with these sports (Bradley et al, 2013, p.12).

This study illustrates the impact that school sports can have on academic achievement.

Encouraging participation in school sport can help promote academic achievement as well as providing an opportunity to achieve health promoting physical activity.

Physical Education is a teaching and learning space that can support young people's identity struggles. When a sociocultural perspective is adopted in the teaching and learning of PE student views will be valued and the student-centred approach will provide a more meaningful experience. Students will have choice in the activities pursued in a non-intimidating space.

PE class has the potential to transform participants identities and make people like Katie and Alice but it has also the potential to unmake people if it contributes to feelings of intimidation, incompetence and enduring life habits of non – participation. It is also a space that participants discover who they are not through their interactions with those around them.

In this final section of the chapter we evidence the research paralleling those of the focus group findings to weave a rich real-life tapestry of life on the corridors. Its participants like Katie and the second-years develop goals and agendas for themselves by evaluating what they have the potential to do within a given context. They negotiate the tools, relationships and roles that help realise those intentions about the desirable self they could produce in interactions with others. The second-years have both the opportunity to participate as well as observe this informal sporting practices. They are afforded the opportunity to learn as they are immersed in this social space. Alice the newcomer teacher is also living culturally in the school. She is given the opportunity to be and to learn from the practices she engages in. Her voluntary involvement in the school sporting life is a central aspect of her participation and her identity development. She is afforded the opportunities to negotiate meaning and a self. In sharp contrast to the positive participation of these participants, I present evidence that highlights challenging participation practices in PE. These were intimidating and highly gendered. Students did not benefit from the opportunities afforded. They were made and unmade into recognising that this was not the kind of way they wanted to live culturally in Coláiste Fionn.

6.5 Conclusion

Table 6F: Key findings of how identity is negotiated through sport

Key Findings	Identity is
1. The practices we find meaning in are the practices we invest our identities in.	Performed
2. Sport is a salient identity to grow by.	Emergent
3. The figured world of sport gathers participants up.	Fluid Relational
4. Layers of meaningful sporting experiences form a construction of identity.	Negotiated Historical Unfolds in the everyday
5. Identities are crafted in bespoke moment-to-moment experiences.	

In this the first findings chapter, I considered the question of how identities are negotiated through sport in new spaces? The above table summarises my findings as I set about answering this question. I have strongly demonstrated how the world of sport is a central means of negotiating identities in Coláiste Fionn. I looked at the experiences of two newcomers to Coláiste Fionn, Katie a first - year pupil and Alice a new teacher. I have shown how both of these participants, through the everyday social practices of sport, form, transform and etch-out a liv-able identity. They are both agents who exhibit the power to act and to play

in this social space. They are engulfed by the figured world of sport in the school and it becomes a place for them to be and to nurture the crafting of a self. Day-to-day, moment-by-moment encounters become the nuts and bolts of their identity formation. Their participation in the everyday sporting opportunities affords them the opportunity to engage in meaning making and hence identity building. People are bound by the structures and spaces, the cultural imaginaries - that are created by the collective, but how they inhabit these structures and figured worlds are not predetermined (Hall et al, 2014, p.163). I also set out how Physical Education can be a space where positive participation in the making of students is compromised by practice. The findings of this chapter amplify how identities are negotiated in habitual social practices and how we are indeed made and unmade by each other. These findings are confirmed and extended in Chapter 7 of this study. These findings strongly point to the lived sociocultural definition of identity that I firmly established in Chapter 2 of this study. Identity is performed, negotiated and emergent. It unfolds in the everyday moment-to-moment encounters of social space. In Chapter 7, I will examine how identities unfold through narrative. In the concluding findings Chapter 8, I will examine how identity is again emergent and performed in the shared practices of a community.

Chapter 7: How identities are made through narrative

7.1 Introduction

Identities are dynamic, that they are produced through narratives, such narrative identities link self and other, and past and present, and that processes of identification are increasingly important in terms of how people produce their identities (Lawler, 2008, p.22).

This chapter illuminates how identities are shaped through the narratives exchanged between participants in communities. It serves to extend the social and relational aspects of identity confirmed in Chapter 6 and sets up the performed and emergent nature of identity evidenced in Chapter 8. I will present the findings of this chapter through examination of visual narratives, oral narratives and the narratives surrounding memory. I have chosen these three aspects as I feel they illuminate the fluidity of identity making as well as its storied nature. In this chapter, we see first - hand how identities are enmeshed with the culture they are embedded in and new identities unfold through engagement in meaningful practices and negotiations of being in this world. The participants layer meaningful experiences and stories to form a construction of identity - a self. This research site of Coláiste Fionn, as a newly amalgamated secondary school is an active space where identity negotiations are all the more visible given the participants previous histories of participation in a different space and time. This chapter traces how identities are constituted in social spaces through the stories we tell to ourselves and to others about them. In Coláiste Fionn narratives and narrative identities plunge teacher and pupil into a sociality.

Narrative identities and lives are embedded in relationships. The atomised individual, where learning is an individual activity, is challenged as identities are produced between persons and within social relations. This chapter explores the ways in which identity building is indeed a form of social participation through narrative exchanges. The participants' identities transform as a result of the social relationships they engage in. This findings chapter

illustrates how identity is indeed constructed through narrative as teacher and pupil in Colaiste Fionn form social spaces where they can share stories of practice and enter a new place in this story in a meaningful way.

This findings chapter is structured in the following way.

As the chapter explores answers to some of Rogers and Scott (2008, p.733) core conceptions of identity the research questions are drawn from their assumptions. The following table summarises the development of this chapter.

Table 7A: Adaptation of Rogers and Scott (2008, p.733)- Basic assumptions common to contemporary conceptions of identity.

Coláiste Fionn -a repository of story

<p><u>Visual Spaces</u> Visual storytelling</p>	<p>Identity is formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation. <u>Research Question:</u> How visual identity evolves in a newly amalgamated school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How significant artefacts shape identities in Coláiste Fionn? 2. How the work of subject departments contributes to identity building? 3. How artwork helps newcomer first years gain an identity? 4. How the collective practices of a second - year art class become identity transforming?
<p><u>Social Spaces</u> Oral storytelling</p>	<p>Identity is formed in relationship with others. <u>Research Question:</u> How identity is formed in relationship with others?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How staff participation in Thursday club transforms their identities? 2. How a collective staff social event impacts on identity? 3. How identities are made through staffroom narrative?
<p><u>Memory Spaces</u> Memory</p>	<p>Identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. <u>Research Question:</u> How identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How identity is established and maintained through memory?

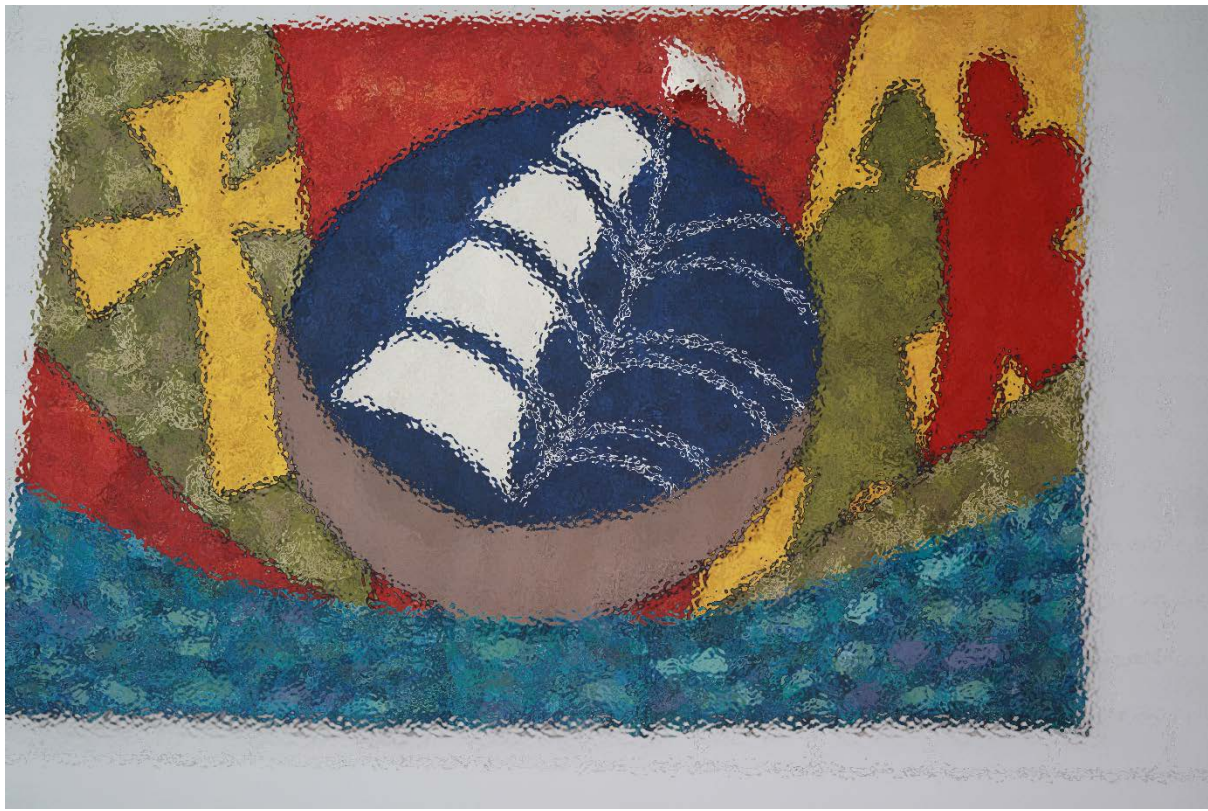
Hence this chapter is divided into three clear sections, and I will begin by exploring the visual storytelling aspect of the school.

Visual context:***7.2 Research Question 1: How Visual Identity evolves in a newly Amalgamated Secondary School?*****Visual Identity:****Visual Narrative- A picture paints a thousand words.****How significant artefacts shape identities in Coláiste Fionn?**

There is a visual narrative speaking as one steps inside the sliding doors at the main entrance to the school. One leaves behind one world and enters that of Colaiste Fionn. There is meaning to be derived in the small tales unfolding from the pictures nailed to the wall. It is here that stories are told about history, time and place. We are introduced to the footprints in time that were and also the hopes of those to follow. These artefacts depict the live values and culture of Colaiste Fionn. In the first section of this chapter I will look at a sample of these artefacts and the small tales behind them that provide invaluable insights into a school community, its people and its place. I will examine how these artefacts are meaning - making and hence key catalysts in the identity building of pupil and teacher.

I have chosen three artefacts that hang on the main walls of the school, as they are rich repositories of meaning. I will explore how each of these pieces individually and collectively impact on identity making. I will demonstrate clearly how these artefacts are strong reifications of both the old and the new world colliding. They exemplify the interwoven relationship that exists between participation and reification (Wenger, 1998) in this newly amalgamated setting.

Figure 7A: Artefact 1- School Crest



The first and by far the most striking of the pictorial artefacts is a copy of the school crest and it was presented to the newly amalgamated school as a present from the Diocese of Cork and Ross. It is placed in a dominant position overlooking the entire school. It is the most prominent piece of art work on display. It was commissioned by the Diocese and cost a sizeable amount of money. The images that are depicted are significant as they symbolise a lot about the school and its environment: pupils, the cross, the sea, the boat, the land. This piece shows off three of the four items on the school crest. I feel that this tapestry bears some of the most significant aspects of a school in this place. The male and female pupil silhouettes signify the co-educational dimension of this school. The boat bobbing on the sea represents the fact that this school is located on the coast and it is nested in a maritime world. The Celtic Cross reminds us of the religious ethos of the school. Hence there is a strong message unfolding in this artefact of the social, cultural, political and historic aspects of Coláiste Fionn. It gives voice to the school's motto – "Ni neart go cur le Chéile", - Unity is

Strength. This crest replaces the former two crests of the pre-amalgamated schools. It supplants them to form a new identity. This identity has evolved from the ashes of the former two schools. There was a political process involving extensive negotiations between the stakeholders, such as pupils, teachers, Parents Association and Board of Management, before this crest was sanctioned. It weaves together the culture of the past and paves the way for the new era of Coláiste Fionn. This bespoke artefact of the school crest links well as a cultural symbol with the second artefact that I outline: the portrayal of “Christ in Glory” on the school wall near the main entrance.



Figure 7B: Artefact 2 Christ in Glory

The second artefact that I have chosen is an original hand carved piece of work. It is placed inside the main entrance to the school. It was a gift to the new school from a retired Bishop. It hangs prominently on the wall and beneath it is the Religion table. I feel that this is a strong symbol of Christianity and the love and welcome of Christ for all who enter the school and live in its community. Christ's outstretched arms signify his care for all of his flock. This

piece is a significant marker of Coláiste Fionn's identity in that beneath it on a table, students participate in rituals like Lent, Advent and Christmas. Books of condolence are signed on the table and this is a space on the first floor of the school. It is not in the prayer room. Rather it is located in the every-day social space where the school community file past it. This suggests that students interact with it actively by signing the book, glancing at the lighted candle or simply remembering former pupils who may have died. I feel that both of these pieces are beacons for the strong Christian ethos that permeates the life of Coláiste Fionn. While the school includes pupils of all religious backgrounds, all aspects of the overall pastoral care within the school reflect a Christian caring attitude. Members of staff place a great emphasis on offering support, being present for and being authentic with pupils in order to show them the potential for their growth and development. The challenges of continuing the pastoral care of pupils is highlighted by Cait as she describes the change for her as a practicing teacher in Colaiste Fionn as opposed to the previous pre - amalgamated school.

We moved from a much smaller, more intimate environment to a much bigger building and a much bigger school body that is not as personable. I suppose the big, big plus of the smaller school was that our pastoral care system came very much into play. We knew all our students, we could identify all students that were experiencing difficulties, students in need. We could look out for them. It's not as readily done in the bigger school, it's more difficult to watch out for our students now in times of difficulty. I think that was the biggest adjustment, I had to realise that I wasn't going to know every student and I wasn't going to hear about every tragedy or loss. In the smaller school, even if you weren't teaching a student you'd know if they'd lost a grandparent or had a personal loss. You'd make sure you'd meet them and talk to them and sympathize with them. Similarly, if they experienced a positive celebratory event in their lives, you'd engage with them (Cáit, May 2014).

I feel that Cáit captures well the essence of the pastoral care system that was and is now transferred to the newly amalgamated school. She saw it as a natural part of her job to extend support to all pupils in the school, not just those she taught. She wrestles with trying to continue this role in her new environment. This new pastoral care system is mirrored in the above artefacts displayed, as they signify how the pastoral care system that was is now

carried over into the new era of Coláiste Fionn. These pieces are strong physical markers of the Christian ethos, the pastoral care system and sense of community embedded in Coláiste Fionn. They visually depict the care that pupils receive within the walls of this new building. I feel that indeed they visually show how identity is formed within multiple contexts bringing cultural and historical forces to bear on its formation. I will now continue to probe into the school's visual identity by looking at a photo collage of both of the pre - amalgamated schools.

Figure 7C: Artefact 3-A selection of pictures representing life in the former pre - amalgamated schools



This is a photo-collage summarising the highlights of the past pre - amalgamation era's in both schools. This collage paints a picture of the historical, cultural, political and social practices of the former pre-amalgamated schools. It gives us a summary of valued practice and a sense of where we have come from. It contains a selection of pictures from sport,

school tours, academic achievements and school activities. The photo-collage exemplifies the interaction between participation and reification in the everyday life of school. The events that students participated in were captured in the moment-to-moment and they have now become stern reifications of telling the story of who we were. It paints a vivid picture of the historical landscape that gave birth to this new school - Coláiste Fionn. It speaks about what was in the past and acts as a beacon of promise for what is yet to come. It is placed at the entrance to the school so any visitors can get a visual snapshot of where we came from. It is also a strong reminder of our links with the past. It bears the valued photographs of life in the old schools and honours what were crowning moments in time. There was of course a vast quantity of photographs to be chosen from. The ones that have made their way to the wall of Coláiste Fionn, have merited their place as truly representative of the old school days. As pupils and visitors to the school glance at this collage they see how a school's identity has evolved. They are reminded of what pupils of their age participated in and valued. They find meaning in the visual story told by each of the pictures. They try and recognise their parents and relations. They are wearing different uniforms and bearing different hairstyles but they are all forming their own identities in a different time and place as they too are made and unmade by each other (Lawler, 2008, p.149). All of these pictorial artefacts act as reifications (Wenger, 1998, p.58), which allow participants in school life to participate in the negotiation of meaning. These meanings that pupils and teachers construct in this new school are influenced by this new world. They are coloured and shaped by the collective ebbs and flows of this effervescent space. They change the experience of living in this world for all who pass by them. It focuses participants' attention in a particular way and enables a new kind of understanding. Wenger talks about these reifications as vestiges. They are the marks that human activities make on the physical world. Just as vestiges were produced in the pre-amalgamated schools, Coláiste Fionn embarks on making its own mark, carving new

vestiges. These marks freeze fleeting moments of engagement in practice into monuments, practices that were valued in the past like the sporting, academic and social. These are carried forward into the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn and held up as valued practices for the future. These reifications in the form of the three artefacts outlined actually participate in the practices in which they are employed. They give meaning to what are valued practices and in so doing have a strong influence on the making of pupils and teachers and also their unmaking in Coláiste Fionn. The pupils and teachers can now endow their identities with meaning through their engagement in these valued practices. The social, historical and political practices they engage in will produce, reproduce and transform this cultural space. Community members are forced into negotiating new meanings. Cáit, in her new world finds it different from the old school where she knew most pupils. Her negotiation of meaning entails her interpretation and action. These processes are not distinct but are in a dynamic relationship to each other. These new circumstances call forth new negotiations and produce new relations with and in this new world of Coláiste Fionn (Wenger, 2008, p.33). Cáit actively engages in doing, thinking, feeling and belonging in this new space. She brings herself to the act of participating. It is an active social process as a member of this newly formed community. She recognises something of herself in others and they recognise something of themselves in her. This experience of mutuality generates a sense of identity in this new culture. Cáit struggles with her lack of empowerment to care as she once did, but, even though her sense of agency is thwarted, she continues to participate in the best way she can. Through her continued participation in the pastoral care network of Coláiste Fionn, she shapes her own experience and at the same time the very practices and identities of this unfolding community. Cáit embodies the ethos of care in Coláiste Fionn. In summary, in this section I set out to explore how significant artefacts shape identities in Coláiste Fionn. I found three reifications that were tools for thinking with and negotiating this new world. The

strong evidence of the Christian ethos and pastoral care system symbolised in the first two artefacts is confirmed and locally appropriated into practices as evidenced by Cáit's struggles to continue the pastoral care system of the old world into the new. The second artefact endorses the diversity and richness of social, cultural, political and historical engagement in meaning - making and forging identities between divergent cultural worlds. In the next section, I will continue my focus on the school's evolving visual identity through looking at a sample of subject work displayed near the main entrance and how the work of subject departments contributes to meaning making and identity negotiation in this new school world.

7.2.1 How the work of Subject Departments contributes to identity building?

I will now explore a specific representation of learning and identity making itself and examine another way in which a spirit of culture or the life of a place can be communicated. It is through the curating of artefacts into a still life - reconstructing an understanding of the school community through the artwork that is proudly displayed on the corridors and the main stairs. I will take a look at how subject work in the areas of Geography and Art develop the visual identity in Colaiste Fionn. This subject work took place in the everyday moment-to-moment spaces of classrooms and provides strong evidence of the interwoven nature of participation and reification in the negotiation of meaning and identities. The following are a selection of this artwork that was displayed during the research year. Each piece tells its own tale about who made it and why it has been chosen to be prominently displayed in the school.

Guided participation: - Geography and Art work- social context

Geography work displayed on the main stairs:

Figure 7D: Geography model of a volcano



This is one of the geography models of a volcano displayed. The students have put a lot of time into preparing this. It is proudly on view in the centre of the main stairway. All visitors to the school would see these pieces as would the student cohort who file up and down the main stairway. Each piece is accompanied by a description of the model. It is not a requirement of the Geography Syllabus that models are prepared and I feel that this work richly symbolises the enthusiasm of this subject teacher for their subject - Geography. The Geography models are good examples of guided participation (Rogoff, 1995). This is helpful when we look at interpersonal engagements and arrangements that fit into socio-cultural processes. The creation of these models in geography class is an everyday event and is part of the nuts and bolts of identity formation, breathing new life into sociocultural exchanges in

Coláiste Fionn. The pupils engage with other pupils and their teacher, Ms Ryan to create the models. They engage with materials and other departments in Coláiste Fionn to organise their completion. The teacher, Ms Ryan, instructs her pupils through deliberate attempts and also incidental comments or actions that are overheard or seen. When she gives advice to one project group, as the classroom is a public space, this narrative is echoed in every other pupils' ears. Rogoff tells us that this guided participation may be tacit or explicit, face-to-face or distal. The pupils in this geography class are participating in a shared and valued practice. Participation requires engagement in some aspect of the meaning of shared endeavours. A person who is actively observing and following the decisions made by another is participating (Rogoff, 1995). Some of the pupils may not be directly constructing the model but they are participating in the practice by their observation. Rogoff sees guided participation as an interpersonal process in which the participants manage their own and others' roles, and structure situations in which they observe and participate in cultural activities. In this geography class Ms Ryan has managed this interpersonal process well. She firstly taught her class the theory surrounding the models. The practice of constructing the models was a meaning making exercise for her pupils. They did this in symmetrical and joint action, through working on the projects in teams. They all participated in this valued practice and their identities were reshaped as a result of this engagement. They were lots of narratives taking place around this assignment, the directing narrative coming from Ms Ryan, using her instruction and guidance to mentor her pupils. She has much experience in this process and knows well the best approach to take when making the models. There is a peer-to-peer narrative amongst the group participants and across groups, as the projects are worked on. There is a negotiation of meaning taking place (Wenger, 1998, p.54) between the pupils and Ms. Ryan. The engagement with the construction of geography models is a good example in Coláiste Fionn of the process by which pupils and teacher experience the world and their

engagement in it as meaningful. The volcano is a reification (Wenger, 1998, p.59), a focus for the negotiation of meaning between the participants. Wenger feels that these objects are only the tip of the iceberg, which indicates larger contexts of significance realised in human practices. Their character as reifications is not only in their form but also in the processes by which they are integrated into the practices (Wenger, 1998, p.61). The negotiation of meaning in this geography classroom weaves together participation and reification.

Reifications like the geography models become public to the extent that they are tangible objects that are put on display on the main stairway. These reifications are how this class impresses its meanings onto this world of school life, and then on meeting them again, perceive them as external facts. These reifications are the product of the geography class's social experience of living in the world of Coláiste Fionn, in terms of membership of a social community. The geography models are their tools and points of focus around which the collective negotiation of meaning through the interweaving of participation and reification forming new identities. I will now look to a sample of student Art work that serves to extend this narrative to the collective and individual unfolding of identities in the art class. The Art Department is located in close proximity to the main entrance and there is always a visual feast for the eyes of the beholder as one walks through. As a researcher I found myself in a First Year Art class and the student's creations spawned rich sites of meaning and evolving identities. In the next section of this chapter I will explore how this learning in the school is a rich source of identity formation for newcomer first year pupils.

7.2.2 How artwork helps newcomer First years to gain an identity?

Figure 7E: Moll's collage of a fox



This is one of the art pieces prepared by a first year as part of an assignment that got the student to create a collage on an animal of their choice. As part of my research I visited a first- year art class. They were diligently working on their pieces under the watchful eye of their art teacher Ms O Hara. I went around to each of them and they told me their story, about why they chose the animal and how they prepared their piece. Jane had made a collage of an armadillo as it was her brother's favourite animal. Orla choose a flat fish because she had a conversation with her grandad one evening about what animal to choose. He suggested this fish as her family knew a lot about fish. Hence the practice of preparing this art work is meaningful to these first - year students. They link to their families to source ideas for their project. They are creating a personal history of belonging within this shared historical and social practice. They are investing their identities in this practice of preparing an art class assignment. It is personally meaningful to them and shared with their fellow art classmates.

Whilst in the art classroom I was able to inquire how they were getting on in first year. This research took place in the last term in school so they would have a good idea about life in Colaiste Fionn. I took a photograph of each piece and I returned some time later and each placed their photograph on a sheet and actually wrote about the piece of art work they produced. This particular collage is one of a fox and Moll has an interesting tale to add about her choice of animal.

I did a collage of a fox. I think I picked a fox because it's a mysterious animal and it's a bit different. I knew doing a fox would be quite a challenge. I also chose a fox because of personal reasons too. When I was younger and I lived in England at the very end of my garden there was a bit of a forest/wood. And every night when it went dark, a fox would come out and sit at the very end of our garden only for about 5 minutes. It never tried to come any further or come near the house, it just used to sit there. I don't know how it got there or how it left as we did have a fence, but it would just sit there. So, when I heard we had to do an animal, a fox was what came into my head (Moll, April, 2013).

Moll remembers her past and makes a connection to the time when she lived in England. She has a vivid recollection of the fox who visited her garden. We will see later in this chapter, how identity is established and maintained through memory. Moll's story and preparation of the fox collage allows her to bring the past into the present and helps her construct a new identity in Coláiste Fionn. Moll goes on to tell us how she lovingly prepared her piece.

I used mainly tissue paper in my collage, but several colours to add tone and make it look like a fox. I cut the tissue paper into small thin strips, to make it look like hair. Now this method definitely took a lot of time but it was worth it in the end, as it looked right. For the white fur, I used cotton wool and I think I got the effect perfectly. I did use magazine cuttings for different places, such as the nose but the main material used was tissue paper (Moll, April, 2013).

Moll tells her own story both visually and through the words that she writes on the sheet to explain why she chose this animal. Just as Moll makes this wonderful art piece, the practice of making the piece with her teacher and classmates makes Moll. She grows into a different person to the one she was when she first entered the school. She bridges the gap between the old world of her primary school with the new world of Coláiste Fionn. In a similar manner to the fox gaining a sense of belonging in Moll's garden, Moll settles into her new school life

through her engagement and interactions in classes like art. Moll's identity is textured by her new experiences in Coláiste Fionn and her identity is performed and transformed through every-day classroom life. Each student in this First Year Art class has their own story to tell as regards why they chose their animal and how they prepared their piece. The students chat freely as they work on finalising each collage. The Art class is a different classroom space and a much enjoyed one by students. It is free from the silence that is policed in most classrooms. Kyra, one of the other students remarks that,

It took a good bit of time to cut and stick all the tiny pieces in place, with the pieces getting stuck all over you, but it was great fun. It is good to have attention to detail when doing it and try to concentrate, but you can talk to the people beside you as well. Its very relaxing. I love Art as my option subject (Kyra, April 2013).

Rogoff (1995), contends that the processes of communication and co-ordination of efforts are central to the notion of guided participation. New members, like Moll and Kyra, are active in their attempts to make sense of activities and may be primarily responsible for putting themselves in a position to participate. Moll and Kyra's small stories convey the importance of the visual narrative that is to be both seen and heard in Coláiste Fionn. The role of Ms O'Hara, the art teacher in guided participation (Rogoff, 1995) is evident as she advises her students on the best approach to take to this assignment, the materials and the techniques to be used. She helps Orla with her flat fish, the fish's body was a really light brown, nearly skin colour so Orla was advised to use pictures of people's skin and different colours of magazine cuttings for tone and shading. The materials Ms O' Hara advised were mainly magazine cuttings, sugar paper, crunched fabric, wool, fur, crepe paper. Both teacher and pupil participated in some aspect of the meaning of this shared endeavour. The pupils in this art class who work on their individual projects, participate in this cultural activity with guidance involving interactions with their teacher, classmates, family members. Guided participation is a deep interpersonal process. It allows new members to a community like these first - year students to take on an active role in making sense of the activities they

participate in. Communication and co-ordination with other members of the community stretches the understanding of all participants (Rogoff, 1995). There is one member of this classroom whose participation is challenged and I will now explore how her identity unfolds in the first-year art class.

Cassy – challenged by participation

This section of the chapter explores the challenge to participate of one student in the first year Art class. Her name is Cassy and Cassy has Down Syndrome. She produced the following collage. Cassy was unable to do a collage of an animal like the rest of the class, but she was able to participate to the best of her ability under the careful guidance of her Special Needs Assistant and her Art teacher Ms. O'Hara.

Figure 7F: Cassy's collage- Cassy chose these colours because they are bright and have patterns on them.



The following account was written by Cassy's special need assistant.

All classes were a challenge for the student due to her physical and academic needs. She was non-verbal and found eye contact difficult. Monitoring her body movements and gestures was also very important. She required one-to-one assistance in completing tasks. The use of visual aids such as PECS and sensory activities were a huge part of her daily routine. It was always difficult to determine whether she engaged and enjoyed an activity. A huge indicator of positive interaction was her completion of a task. Holding her interest was always a challenge. Art was always a class that she did engage with. It was differentiated for her and she attended for a single period of the double class. The above piece was completed by Cassy through lots of prompting, encouragement and visual aid assistance. Creating the picture involved an array of activities. With help and prompts the student selected coloured crepe paper. A huge sensory part was tearing the paper and gluing it to the background card. Cassy enjoyed the tearing activities but disliked the texture of the glue. The picture she made in the end was very vibrant and intense. It was always great when Cassy completed an activity. It showed she engaged and was included (Cassy's SNA, May 2013).

Cassy's Art teacher Ms. O'Hara gave the following account of working with her.

This particular student attended a reduced Art class as it was difficult to hold her attention span for long periods. She would have needed one-to-one assistance in completing tasks, required prompting, often got distracted and would need to take regular breaks. Due to Cassy's needs it was difficult to determine whether she enjoyed the activity. Art would have been more of a sensory experience for this student (Ms.O'Hara, May 2013)

The Art classroom provided opportunities for Cassy to participate in the discourse. From a sociocultural perspective, Cassy is not viewed as "weak" or "bright", rather the focus is on the participation structures and contexts within which Cassy as a learner is provided with the opportunities for initiating and advancing her ways of knowing. The sociocultural definition of ability/disability and competence/incompetence challenge current conceptions of these educational constructs by shifting the focus from the individual student Cassy to the student-in-context. Here context is constituted by the moment-to-moment interactions between Cassy's Special Needs Assistant and her Art teacher Ms' O'Hara, within particular cultural practices and activity settings like the Creation of a collage in Art class. It is evident from this research that Cassy's learning is scaffolded by her SNA and Art Teacher. There would be a vast difference between what Cassy could create without help and what she achieved with the

guidance and encouragement that she received. It is clear evidence of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in operation in the classrooms of Coláiste Fionn (Vygotsky, 1981).

This lens into classroom life serves to strengthen my argument that learning and identity formation takes place through the people around us (Vygotsky, 1981). I can conclude that Moll, Kyra and Cassy as newcomers to Coláiste Fionn are made into different people as old identities are broken down and new ones emerge in this new social space. It is the interaction, discourse and participation processes that emerge between people in this social context that is identity transforming. I will now extend this finding to other students in the school by examining how second year student identities are transformed through their participation in art class.

7.2.3 How the collective practices of a second -year art class is identity transforming?

Figure 7G: Second year bird collage



The final piece I have chosen for this findings chapter is a bird collage, the work of a second year Art Class. It speaks of the significance of collaboration in an amalgamated school if learning and identity making is to occur. It is important that everyone finds their space and tells their story and this magnificent collage speaks to my research as symbolising the fusion of both mind and body in its creation. I have chosen this work as I feel that it is a collective piece as a number of students worked on its creation and its end product signifies the teamwork involved in the project as well as the moulding of a number of new identities. It is also the work of another year group and acts as a repository of meaning and the unique identity of this group of second year students. This is proudly displayed on the school wall. It consists of 25 individual pieces, that together form a single co-ordinated picture. I feel that it tells the individual story of each of the class participants and this is collated into one big story when the jig-saw is pieced together. Each piece is a beautiful and unique portrayal of a bird, they are all different species of birds that flock together, just like the enmeshment of this group of second years that find themselves occupying a second - year art class. Each piece of this puzzle is created with time and care and there are stories told about stories as the students exchange banter about the ebbs and flows of life in Coláiste Fionn. The Art teacher Ms O'Hara has scaffolded (Vygotsky, 1981) the students learning by helping them to achieve more than they would on their own. The figured world (Holland, 2003) of art has captured the students. The situated nature of identity in this art class, as collectively formed, socially produced in this culturally constructed activity, is evidenced. The students through their participation in the figured world of art come to reconceptualise what and who they are individually and as members of this collective social order.

This visual narrative in Coláiste Fionn, copper-fastens the notion that identity is formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation. Each picture has its own story to tell, just like the individual students that have

created it. The telling of this story unveils the formation and reformation of new identities of a community and its people. It is a good example of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p.73). Practice exists in this art class because pupils engage in the action of creating a bird collage, whose meaning they negotiate with one another. Practice resides in this community of people and the relations of mutual engagement by which they creatively produce this beautiful piece of artwork. We evidence Dorothy Holland's conceptualisation of identity building as improvised in this everyday flow of activity in art and geography class (Holland, 2001). Pupils are indeed caught between their past histories and drawn toward the new discourses and images that attract them. Being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in this community of practice. There is an on-going narrative between the participants, ranging from talk about the work they are creating to personal exchanges woven into their conversations. This leads to my consideration of the social context of identity building that I will now explore.

Social Context:

7.3 How Staff participation in Thursday Club transforms their identities?

Vignette 1

Alice – the newcomer teacher's place in the story.

Alice is glad she went to Thursday club. Early in September she saw a note on the staffroom noticed board about a few members of staff going for a meal and a trip to the cinema afterwards. This is a weekly event and all staff are welcome especially newcomers. Alice goes along most Thursday evenings and finds it a good way of socialising as well as getting to know her colleagues. She feels that teaching is really unique. If you work in an office your colleagues are around you but when you are in the classroom it is just the teacher and 30

pupils. She finds that at Thursday club there are at least 5 or 6 other teachers that can support her. It's nice for her to know that there are staff members that she can trust and would support her, offer to help her out and advise her on a situation. The Thursday club staff are mainly the younger single staff members. They are such good friends that they arrange to go on holidays together during the school breaks. They travel as far as America together. Alice is happy to be invited to join them but declines the invitation. The Christmas jumper party is a very memorable evening as 20 staff members meet up for a meal and a few drinks. The Thursday club members are out in force as they proudly wear their Christmas jumpers. They are delighted when they see that a staff member is wearing a penguin on her Christmas jumper. The penguin is their emblem and has been present at all their events. One of the Thursday club members is an Art teacher and it is proposed that she design a crest for the group with a penguin. They exchange their Secret Santa presents and discuss their next planned adventure.

Stories to live by:

There are of course many relationships in Coláiste Fionn, those that exist between teacher and pupil, pupil and pupil to name but a few. I wish to my find answers to my second research question – how identity is formed in relationship with others? Drawing from this well of human relationships, I rest my eyes on a unique teacher- teacher honeycomb of relationships called – Thursday Club. Thursday Club is a bespoke social space in Coláiste Fionn that allows teachers to be, they engage, interact and participate in social relations. It is this space that helps participants to negotiate their unfolding identities and in so doing the emergent identity of Coláiste Fionn. In the next section of this chapter I explore answers to my second research question – how identity is formed in relationship with others?

In the early months of amalgamation, a unique social space was formed in Coláiste Fionn. It consisted of 5/6 core staff members. One of the members had worked for some years in one of the former schools, whilst the others were mainly newcomers to teaching as well as newcomers to this school. They taught various subjects and the common bond was that they were young, free and single in that they did not have family commitments that would dictate their evening time. This core group would be joined by other staff members from time to time from chaplaincy, administration and mainstream teaching. Thursday Club was born. It was so named as it took place on Thursday evenings. Teachers would meet up around 6pm for a meal and afterwards go to the cinema or some other social event. It is not an exclusive club, it cuts across departmental lines and generational boundaries. All are welcome. Despite the fact that there is a core group of regular attenders' other staff members join in from time to time. Thursday Club is a space where these teacher identities are shaped and reshaped, composed and recomposed. I feel that these evenings are a rich source of social participation. This participation, according to Wenger, is not just in these local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but in a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. Participating in these social outings as a work team is both a kind of action and a form of belonging (Wenger, 2009, p.209). This can be felt as Helena recalls that the previous evening's outing was great fun. They went for a meal in a local restaurant and coeliacs had choice. The meal was great and the film *Philomena* was excellent but she regretted not bringing tissues. I feel that these social outings are clear evidence that identity needs to be understood not as belonging within the individual teachers in Coláiste Fionn but as produced between persons and within the social relations that occur during such events (Lawler, 2008, p.8). Helena through her membership of Thursday club engages in the process of producing an identity through assembling various memories, experiences and

episodes within a narrative. These stories exchanged in Thursday Club are not simple acts of description but are complicated procedures for making sense of her world, of the details of her days and, ultimately Helena's life (Lawler, 2008, p.13). The stories act as interpretive devices through which Helena makes sense of, understands and live her life. Lawler (2008) sees identity as profoundly social, and as continually interpreted and reinterpreted. I feel that this happens in spaces like Thursday Club, as stories are told and retold. Thursday Club is often used as a treat in Coláiste Fionn. When staff members had a long day in school for a parent/teacher meeting, the following day Thursday Club head to the cinema. Lawler sees the social world of activities like the Thursday Club adventures as storied, and one where the solitary individual is replaced with a person enmeshed in and produced within these webs of social relations (Lawler, 2008, p.19). The Spa days and cinema outings are striking evidence of how identity is indeed formed in relationship with others through the medium of socially, culturally, and historically ongoing systems of activity, involving people who are related in multiple and heterogeneous ways.

Learners are active participants seeking meaning and learning in a social world. It occurs through identity development, as participants layer meaningful experiences and stories to form a construction of identity. Clandinin and Connelly (2001) contend that teacher knowledge is narratively constructed. It has a narrative life history and is made up of storied life compositions. These stories are narratives of experience and they reflect the personal life history of the teacher as well as the social. They use a landscape metaphor to capture how professional knowledge is composed of a variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. They see the landscape as storied and to enter this landscape is to enter a place in the story. Newcomers and indeed old-timers in Coláiste Fionn are enmeshed in this new landscape. In the Thursday Club teachers are free to talk about

stories of practice, to share, to add, to construct and deconstruct lives. Hence, identities are constructed, represented and performed in this social space.

Classrooms are, for the most part, safe places, generally free from scrutiny, where teachers are free to live stories of practice. These lived stories are essentially secret ones.

Furthermore, when their secret lived stories are told, they are, for the most part, told to other teachers in secret places (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:3). Thursday Club and social evenings provide a sacred space where new-comers mingle with old-timers to offer support and a sense of collegiality. Anna an experienced teacher recalls the importance of Thursday Club in the lives of teachers in Coláiste Fionn.

We put Thursday meetings in the calendar every week, even if you're wrecked and had a really terrible day, we've had people say they are not coming to Thursday Club and they end up coming to dinner, and they end up staying the whole evening, because just by the time you get there you relax (Anna, April 2013).

Lawler (2008) contends that identities can be seen as being creatively produced through various raw materials available, notably memories, understandings, experiences and interpretations. The teachers in Thursday Club provide a daily support network to their fellow colleagues on an ongoing basis. Anna feels this is a very important aspect to her teaching in Coláiste Fionn.

It makes a difference all the same if there is something wrong, I definitely have 5 or 6 people who I could get to support me, as it is not everyone you could run to, like everyone is good of course in here, everyone is helpful but it is nice to know I could definitely go to them and trust them with what I'm telling them. In fact, they offer to help me out, or to advise me in the situation (Anna, April 2013).

Thursday Club has helped newcomers like Alice settle into Coláiste Fionn. It is the social activities organised that facilitate meaning making in social situations. Teachers participate in activities and this allows identities to emerge. Lave argues that on engaging with a community of practice new members are allowed legitimate peripheral participation in the practice. An individual's limited peripherality allows them more than mere observation. It

offers participation as well as a way of learning about the group and the world. The social experiences within the community of practice facilitate the development of an identity of membership within the group (Hall et al, 2014, p.206). Newcomer teachers like Alice get to peer through a window illuminating the culture of teaching practice in this place. Thursday Club affords the opportunity to new staff like Alice, to make its culture of practice their own. Alice reiterates how important going to Thursday club is for her.

Thursday clubs, they are really, really memorable because we've had such crack, London as well, we went away to London and that was brilliant. I think it is all the social things really. It has been made very open to everyone, we've asked everyone all along. I think it more that none of us have real ties like, we don't have to be home to make dinner or anything and that's why it's worked. But, also we don't want people to feel that they can't join in. In the staffroom today, I happened to mention that we were going to dinner tonight and some of the older teachers we aren't much older than us remarked that they wished that there had been a thing like that when they were say back a few years before they had commitments. I think it does show the positives of having a social side to your job (Alice, May 2014).

The teachers' conversations may revolve around in-classroom sacred stories, but once they are discussed teachers feel much happier to return to school the next day.

We might talk about school and stuff for a long time, but actually everyone is so much happier for getting it off their chest. You go to Thursday club and everyone has some really bad experience and even if it's a case that you can kinda laugh at it at some point it really helps going back in the next day that you've told people you can trust and it's a kinda therapy. Well, its sympathy and empathy (Anna, April 2013).

Alice is made very welcome in Coláiste Fionn, and her social outings with Thursday club are some of the more memorable moments of her time in the school. She has even travelled abroad with her work colleagues during school breaks. It is an opportunity to bond and share with each other as opposed to getting a break from colleagues. The venting that takes place on the social outings gives valuable support and collegiality, but also a therapy to colleagues who feel better facing back into the workplace the following day. Teachers' identities evolve in the interplay of social, cultural, political and historic forces that abound. We can see how

identities are truly built upon social interactions in the following section. I will continue to look at the social narrative in Colaiste Fionn but focus on the oral storytelling that takes place in the school staffroom. The staffroom is a rich hub of social relations inside the school walls, in contrast to the Thursday Club activities that take place outside school hours. Again, we will find that staff identities are built within the social interactions of this school community.

7.3.1 Clusters of stories- told and untold

I really liked there being a freshness to the staff when the two staffs came together, you know the way groups can be very cliques and you can feel a bit of an outsider, even if you're there for years. You feel you don't fit in as well as other people do in some groups. (Mary, April, 2013).

Identities are situated in webs of social relationships as stories about practice are exchanged in social spaces in Coláiste Fionn. McCarthy & Moje (2002, p.231) feel that identities are in part culturally situated, mediated, and constructed. Identities are built within the social interactions one has within a particular discourse community. This links well with Rogers and Scott (2008, p.733) assertions regarding identity. Identity is therefore negotiated by an individual in cultural spaces involving other people, ideas and histories. A shift in identity involves the experience of becoming someone different. It concerns a shift in perspective on one's sense of self, and indeed in this study a teacher's sense of themselves in Colaiste Fionn. This is possible for old-timers as well as new-timers. Brook (2006, p.3) suggest that displacement spaces are places we move into, either by force or choice, whereby we see things differently. This is evident from Mary's reaction to how she finds life in this newly amalgamated space. Mary had taught for several years in one of the former schools and did not find she fitted in there. The move to the newly amalgamated school offers a displacement space for Mary. She felt that she did not fit in in her former pre-amalgamated school and the move has given her a new place in the

landscape of practice. She has reshaped her identity with colleagues. Thus, displacement spaces offer potentially fertile ground for growth. Sorting out and discussing one's story can be an important way to work through displacement spaces (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Mary has experienced a shift in her identity. Our identities are not fixed. They are fluid and dynamic. Who we are- our multiple selves- are indeed influenced by the contexts in which we live, act, and interact. Positions in our daily teaching encounters can impact and shape the development of lived story lines. Setting up contexts where we may enter displacement spaces, such as Mary's move to the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn, can position us to re-examine our lived story lines and construct alternative lived story lines. These re-examined story lines can help people like Mary to see her colleagues in new ways from different perspectives. This links well to Connelly and Clandinin's understanding of teacher's identity as a unique embodiment of her stories to live by, shaped by the landscapes past and present in which she lives and works. Thursday Club is a unique social space where teacher identities are shaped and reshaped, composed and recomposed through each other. The Thursday Club adventures bring together the social, cultural, political and historical forces that influence identity formation. This is a key finding of this research and underlines the significance of a local network of support for all teachers as they navigate through the professional landscape. This is evidenced further as I explore the impact of another collective staff social event on identity formation.

7.3.2 How a staff event impacts on the negotiation of identity?

I will now explore a different kind of artefact, not one up for show but one that reifies a particular moment of time and therefore a particular aspect of the Coláiste Fionn identity. The Grease Sing-A-Long is a joyous staff occasion, allowing staff to dress up and display their identities through their engagement, interaction and participation in this fun night out. This

night out provided the staff with the tools to build their narrative and have their story shaped and influenced by the people around them. Identities are shaped- “for one night only”.

Grease Sing-A-Long - For One Night Only

Figure 7H: Ticket for the Grease Sing-A-Long



The above ticket symbolises a fleeting moment in the history of the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn. I will now explore how this event in the lives of teachers has a transforming impact on their identities. This was a fund raiser organised in aid of the local Tourism and Development Association. The wine and cheese reception in a near - by bar proved a great place for staff to mingle with each other as well as with people from the community. The Thursday Club group had already met for their own meal beforehand. There was a DJ and there was a prize for the best costume on the night as well as several spot prizes. The majority of the staff of Coláiste Fionn attending were new staff for this academic year along with the

Thursday Club. The staff of Coláiste Fionn nest in the local community, chat and exchange stories. Steedman (1996) feels that in learning to identify with other people, other events and other times, we are learning specific ways to reflect on and understand ourselves. This Thursday Club outing is a good example of staff members participating in a meaningful activity. Learning is situated in group activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and distributed across group participation (Rogoff, 1995). Wenger (1998), also feels that learning is a process of identity formation. Learning is occurring for staff members on this social outing where stories are told and untold and staff identities are both performed and transformed in the moment - to - moment exchanges. We make our life stories in particular ways. We make sense of experience in specific ways. We assemble sets of episodes to make an ongoing story. Hence various forms of narrative become resources on which we can draw, constituting our own narrative identity. I can conclude that this social outing has made staff members of Coláiste Fionn into different kinds of people. They see both themselves and others in a different way, through their participation in the negotiation of meaning in this social event. They are transformed. Lave's theoretical argument that identity is fluid and changes depending on what we are doing, where we are and who we are with is evidenced by actions of staff at this social event. The unfolding of identity in the everyday sees teachers in a collaborative activity engage in conversation and interaction that serves to construct their own social position and their social relations with one another.

Hence, we can see how the visual identity of Coláiste Fionn is evolving in a cultural context through artefacts like the bespoke school crest and Christ in Glory. The photo collage of the old schools depicts the social, cultural and historic seeds of Coláiste Fionn. The subject work of Geography and Art are strong reifications of the meaning that is negotiated between participants and the identities that are fashioned in the classrooms of Coláiste Fionn. Hence my findings give credence to the Rodgers and Scott (2008, p.733) assertion that identity

evolves within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear upon its formation.

I can conclude this section of the chapter with strong evidence of the evolution of a visual identity in this newly amalgamated school - Coláiste Fionn. The school together with its pupils and staff are carving out new ways of being through their interaction, engagement and participation in meaningful practices. Mind is a truly social and cultural phenomenon as our social interactions and use of cultural tools become our experiences for learning and identity formation in this everyday space. The identity of Coláiste Fionn is emergent, performed and relational, which leads to the next section of the chapter that develops this work on how the visual narrative is made in relationship with those around us and leads me to explore further how identity is formed in relationship with others in Coláiste Fionn.

7.3.3 How Identity is made through narrative in the staffroom?

Vignette 2

Day 1:

Alice's first day in Colaiste Fionn, she follows a few chatty teachers up the winding stair case to the staffroom. The staffroom is alive with laughter, chat and exchanges. The little kitchenette is crammed with teachers as they grab a fast cuppa before the morning staff meeting begins. Alice is pleasantly surprised by the degree of warmth from the other staff members. She is asked questions like where is she from? And what subjects does she teach? She is quickly introduced to colleagues in her department. She feels more at ease now.

The staffroom

The staffroom in Coláiste Fionn is no different from that of any other school in that it functions as the social hub of staff life. Conversation abounds about family life, sport and academic affairs. It is the place where agent, activity and world are often enmeshed (Rogoff,1995). Rogoff's conception of participation in communities as occurring across three interlinked and interdependent planes: apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation, is helpful in illuminating the findings of my research. She defines these cultural, social and personal practices as the multi-layering sites where learning occurs. Indeed, the staffroom in Coláiste Fionn is a rich site for Rogoff's theory to be evidenced as new newcomers and old newcomers are made and unmade by each other (Lawler,2008). In this section I will analyse how oral narrative is an important aspect of how these individuals build new identities through their staffroom conversations, communications, interactions, and joint participations.

The male table- pass the salt:

In Coláiste Fionn, the male staff members occupy their own table. This is in the social area and at break times they have their chat and cup of tea. Mattie is not only a new newcomer to the school but also to teaching. He has just completed his PGDE in a private fee - paying school and is keen to be inducted into the apprenticeship of teaching. He has an opportunity to craft his identity in Coláiste Fionn. In his interview regarding life in school he remarks that this seating arrangement in the staffroom arises more out of what male staff have in common to chat about rather than any distinct divisions in the staff.

Fairly segregated that way, I suppose in that the men seem to stick to each other and the women seem to stick to each other. I suppose more like just what we'd be talking about more than just fracturing the staffroom. Just predominantly talking about soccer or champions league at the moment and I don't know how interesting the female staff must find it. But definitely a little segregated alright, but as I say I don't think that seems to come across generally in the staff, it's more chatting with the lads at lunch than avoiding the females more so than that (Mattie, April 2013).

Mattie sits at the male table. His identity as a newcomer teacher and new newcomer to Coláiste Fionn is moulded by this experience. Identities incorporate the use of cultural tools which enable navigation between the self and the collective, the social order. James Wertsch sets forth the term ‘mediated action’, which is a term designed to bridge the gap between the person and the social world in which the person lives (Wertsch, 1985). The language of soccer and Champions League exchanged in the narratives are a good example of a shaping resource for the acting or performing of the self. The language of sport is a key mediational tool that allows Mattie to engage and participate with his fellow male colleagues. Mattie as the acting subject and the language tools he uses are inseparable from each other. They are enmeshed as the agent, activity and world are mutually constitutive (Rogoff, 1995). The language of sport is a mediational tool for Mattie to connect with his previous teaching experience as a PGDE student and his participation in that staffroom. There was a similar segregation of males and females in that staffroom. Mattie recalls,

Last year again the same story, it was probably even worse as we had a kind of fantasy football team going with the male side of the staff, so it was definitely everyday just chatting about who you were picking for your team and who were playing. Again, just something to talk about rather than being afraid to talk to the women staff (Mattie, May 2014).

Hence, I contend that the social landscape of teaching is narratively constructed, and storied. Mattie is able to make connections with his past through his shared interests with his male colleagues. Through Mattie’s participation in the conversations that are meaningful to him his identity is formed. His identity is fashioned in these every-day, moment-by-moment exchanges at the male table. It is a pivotal lookout post for Mattie to get an insider perspective on the social side of life in the staffroom. It serves as the means through which he learns, grows and transforms himself. It is evident that the self that Mattie can negotiate is dependent on the others around him. In this case it is his fellow male colleague in Colaiste Fionn. The identity

or self is jointly constructed and can only be given legitimacy in interaction with others. Mattie as a newcomer to this space must try to belong by contributing to these conversations. His participation is the key tool that shapes his identity transformation.

Identity in practice is defined socially not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but also because it is produced as a lived experience, of participation in specific communities (Murphy & Hall, 2008, p.104)

Identities are formed through the ongoing narratives woven between the staff in Coláiste Fionn. These take place in the formal and informal spaces of the school. The teacher workstations are crammed with textbooks but also the human stories that filter between staff members as they correct tests and plan their next lesson. There are also small talks in the tiny kitchenette and the social area of the staffroom about school, family and life. One such conversation revolves around the staff fancy dress day organised for the school's Health promoting School Awareness Week. The staff have been circulated an email, through the school's internal email system. It invites all staff to participate in this fun activity. The best outfit will be voted for by the first years. To encourage participation by the staff, a €2 fine will be imposed on non- participating staff members.

Figure 7I: Staff poster for fancy dress



This event generated a lot of interest from the staff, if you were going to dress up, and if so as what. It is this very engagement in practice that gives us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participants. This is as true for the new newcomers as it is for the old newcomers. All staff members in Colaiste Fionn, were on the same exciting adventure. It didn't matter if it was your first - year teaching in the school or if you had taught for 20 years in one of the old schools. This dress up event was a new phenomenon in the life of Coláiste Fionn. It would also call on teachers to leave their teacher mode, come out of their comfort zones of classroom talk and chalk. It would give each individual teacher and opportunity to express their own unique identities and share this with colleagues as well as the whole school community. This experience of identity in practice is a way of being in the world (Murphy&Hall, 2008, p.104). I suggest that these small stories that

are exchanged between staff and the subsequent exchanges on nights such as Friday February 7th, are what teachers do in forming both their identities and the communities that they form.

I was a bit unsure what to dress up as. One of the staff members who was on the Health Promoting Committee offered me a blonde wig that she had. So, I went as a mix between, Hannah Montana, Lady Gaga and a Cowgirl. There was a great buzz in the staffroom in the morning before class as we tried to identify our colleagues. The students in the corridor were highly amused as we navigated our way to class. 25 staff members participated in the dress up day and at lunch time we went to the PE hall to be judged by the first years. We paraded around the centre of the hall and first prize was awarded to the school chaplain who was dressed as a guard from Buckingham Palace. The second prize was awarded to a science teacher who was a superb zombie. The entire science department dressed as zombies! This dress up day was so public that staff members were seen in a different light by their colleagues and pupils. Identities transformed throughout the course of the day. It allowed staff to bond at a departmental level, as in the case of the Science Department. The staff of the Science Department were perceived as having a fun identity and an ability to enter into the spirit of any occasion. The Science Department are telling a story about their lives both to themselves and others, and it is through such stories that they make sense of their world, and their relationship to that world. Stories are also a means through which they make sense of the relationship between themselves and other selves in Coláiste Fionn (Lawler, 2008, p.12). They had met to discuss their plan of action for the day so there was a co-ordinated approach to their look. As a staff we experienced ourselves through our participation in this fun event, and the small stories that were exchanged within the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world of Colaiste Fionn.

The key finding of this section of the chapter pinpoints how interactions of the staff both externally in Thursday Club and internally in the Staffroom clearly set forth how identity is

made for teachers in Coláiste Fionn through their relationships and the stories that ebb and flow between themselves. It is clear that the social spaces are rich repositories for identity development as learners become active participants seeking meaning and learning in this social world. The honeycomb of social relationships helps identities to be constructed, represented and performed as evidenced here.

In the final section of this chapter I focus on memory spaces and their role in the negotiation of identity. The findings will extend that of the social narrative as I explore how identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time.

7.4 Research Question 3: How identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time?

Narrative and Memory

How Identity is established and maintained through memory?

Clusters of stories told and untold:

Memories are made up of places and people, which we creatively and jointly reconstruct with others in social interaction when we remember (Hall et al, 2014, p.146)

I will now complement and develop the story of this chapter by looking further into the social narrative through my examination of the role memory has to play in the negotiation of identity. In the course of my research, teachers gathered in a focus group to discuss some issues pertinent to their everyday lives in Coláiste Fionn. I found the following discussion illustrative of the crucial role of memory in etching out teacher space in this new place. The teachers reminisce about play and the freedom that pupils used to have in their former schools. The context for this was a student survey for the Health Promoting School which highlighted the students' need to play ball during break times. In response to this management arranged that a box of balls would be placed in the main office and made available to students during lunchtime and break times. Students would be free to sign them

in and sign them out as they wished. It would allow them to occupy some of the outdoor spaces that they had just been walking around. Teachers then tell each other stories of how life used to be for them in the old place. Stories shape our memories into something meaningful by fusing past, present and future together in the creation of an identity (Hall et al, 2014, p.152). These old places are portrayed as places where it was free to be and kick a ball. This contrasts sharply with this new school. Despite having such tremendous sporting facilities like three hard court areas, tennis courts, basketball courts and pitches, students behave like drones walking around in circles. Daniel speaks about how school life was:

Until recently, you didn't have to provide, or put a poster up to say there are now footballs available. They'd bring in a tennis ball and they'd play handball or they'd kick it around, they wanted to play so much that they'd be a danger that it would become boisterous. Now as has just been said, they are like drones. They just go around in circles. We have all of this space and all of these hard courts. I often think if students in other schools could come down and see what's available, and there are schools where pupils don't have anywhere to go at lunchtime (Daniel, May 2013).

As teachers reflect back to their former school sites, they think of the pupils that inhabited these places. This is because we are part of these people and these places, and they, through social interaction, become a part of us (Hall et al, 2014:146). Hence, from a narrative point of view identities have histories and these histories are active in our present. They are narrative constructions that take shape as life unfolds. Identity is formed through remembering as teachers cast their minds back to what life used to be like before amalgamation. They paint a picture of free play and spontaneity. This contrasts sharply with the rigour and order of this new space. There is an overwhelming sense of nostalgia and loss for what was. Eoin remarks that he has never seen the pupils in Coláiste Fionn taking off their jumpers and putting them on the ground for goal posts. Claire, agrees with Eoin and says there was always some fella that would have a ball in a locker somewhere and they'd bring it out at lunchtime. Ellie joins

in the conversation as she remembers how playing ball, was such an intrinsic part of school life in her former pre-amalgamated school.

They used to have their own class ball. But I suppose our seniors don't have a class as such, do they. They don't really because they're mixed for everything and they don't have a class as such. I know they would always have had say a 6th class ball and they'd mind it, and thou shalt not touch it (Ellie, May 2013).

Daniel has a story to add to the cluster about a discipline issue he had to deal with in the former school. It again highlights the importance to students of the ball and the freedom of play that was.

I can remember dealing with a discipline issue where the collective ball was in some poor kid's locker and that kid wasn't in that day and they kicked in the locker to get the ball out. And now we have people and it's the exact opposite. And it wouldn't even occur to them...all these facilities and literally under their noses and they stroll past them (Daniel, May 2013).

Teachers continue to exchange stories about how they perceived play in their former schools and through this sharing of stories, identity becomes established and maintained. Identity is a form of social negotiation with the world. For these teachers, memory serves as a medium for this process of meaningful social negotiation as our stories about ourselves articulate what you can say you are, according to what they say you can be (Johnson, 1973 in Madsen, 1999). Hall et al argue that memory is a social process, and both the product and the process create meaning (Hall, 2014). We can see this first hand as Cáit remembers what life was like for her in the old school. She wrestles with trying to maintain a similar pastoral care system in Colaiste Fionn. She remembers this aspect as a challenge but finds the technology in her new environment awesome.

In the old school we would not have had the wonderful technology and facilities that we have here. It's an amazing building. Having the powerpoint and having the technology in the classroom is wonderful. That also presented a challenge to me, because I'm a complete dinosaur, so I had to engage with computers and I find it wonderful now (Cáit, May 2014).

As Cáit casts her mind back to the days of the old school, she remembers the positives and negatives of the different schools. The whole process of going back brings her forward to a

place where she has found a resolution to her issues. She is very positive about the overall amalgamation and talks about how well both staffs have gelled together as a team.

I think we've settled in well, and I think that as a staff, we are now more confident and at ease with each other as well. We are a team now as opposed to two schools striving to find a common ground (Cáit, May 2014).

Cáit is a teacher who has journeyed from the old school and has now found her niche in Coláiste Fionn. Despite the challenges of amalgamation, she feels that it has been all worthwhile. Mattie the newcomer teacher also remembers his previous year's staffroom experience of Fantasy Football with male staff colleagues and also discipline differences.

Different kind of set up here. It was a private school, a fee-paying school, so discipline in the classroom wouldn't have been as much of an issue. The facilities were quite good there, especially from the PE side of things (Mattie, May 2013).

As Mattie remembers his first year of teaching last year, he makes the connection with the discipline issues and the PE facilities in both schools. He uses his past experiences to gain a sense of place in Coláiste Fionn. His strong link to sport with his male colleagues is another way that he remembers and makes it his story. We can see Mattie's identity as dynamic in the contrasts he unveils between his two years teaching experience. We can see his identity grow and develop and be produced through narrative. This narrative identity links Mattie to the others around him, his fellow colleagues and pupils. It links his past to his present and helps him make meaning in time.

This is further evidenced in the focus group as teachers retell stories like the one about the football in their former schools. I contend that as the teachers tell their story it echoes the story of others from a past time and place. This narrative process is helpful for teacher's new identities to be formed as well as to help them understand their present setting in terms of their past. These teachers' memories are real as they have been lived by their everyday participation in social interaction. Memory always implies a selection as stories retell

themselves to us only when they are meaningful to our everyday experiences (Hall et al, 2014, p.152). The cluster of stories told by the teachers in this focus group of their past experience of the ball and play were meaningful, everyday lived experiences that help them to come to terms with this newfound space of Coláiste Fionn. The teachers' trip down memory lane afforded them the opportunity to fuse the past, present and future in the creation of a new identity.

7.4.1 Remembering and forgetting

Wenger (1998, p.88) declares that participation and reification act as distinct forms of memory and distinct forms of forgetting. Reification is a source of remembering and forgetting by producing forms that persist and change according to their own laws. The combination of malleability and rigidity characteristic of physical objects yields a memory of forms that allows our engagement in practice to leave enduring imprints in the world. The physical object of the football in my findings is one such example of a reification that compels the teachers to renegotiate the meaning of its past products. Such shapes of the world are open to reinterpretation and multiple interpretations as can be seen from the teacher exchanges. Wenger sees participation as a source of remembering and forgetting, through our memories and through the fashioning of identities, and through our need to recognise ourselves in our past (Wenger, 1998). He concludes that remembering and forgetting stem from the interaction of participation and reification. These are very important concepts that lie at the core of this research and my findings highlight how the duality between them connect us to our histories. We are indeed connected to our histories through forms like a simple football. It is through our experience of participation that our identities are formed and interlocked through mutual engagement in practice (Wenger, 1998, p.89). In this section of the chapter I focused on how identity making involves the construction and reconstruction

of meaning through stories overtime. The findings clearly point to the fact that it is through the sharing of stories that identity becomes both established and maintained. This is also a social process and supports that identity formation takes place through the people around us and is occasioned in the everyday social spaces.

7.5 Conclusion

Table 7B: Key findings of identity negotiated through narrative

Colaiste Fionn -a repository of story	
<u>Visual Spaces</u> Visual storytelling	<u>Research Question:</u> How visual identity evolves in a newly amalgamated school? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity is formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation. • Artefacts illuminate the Christian ethos and the pastoral care identity of Coláiste Fionn. • The situated nature of identity as collectively formed and socially produced in culturally constructed activity, is established through the work of subject departments.
<u>Social Spaces</u> Oral storytelling	<u>Research Question:</u> How identity is formed in relationship with others? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday club social evenings provide a sacred space where newcomers mingle with old timers to offer support and extend their identities. • Teachers through collaborative activity demonstrate the fluidity of identity as they change depending on what they are doing, where they are and who they are with. • Identities are built through oral storytelling in conversation, interaction and joint participation in staffroom life. • Social spaces are rich repositories for identity development.
<u>Memory Spaces</u> Memory	<u>Research Question:</u> How identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. • Through the sharing of stories identity becomes established and maintained. • Stories shape our memories into something meaningful by fusing past, present and future in the creation of an identity.

In this chapter I focused on how Coláiste Fionn is a repository of stories and how it impacts on participants' identities. I concentrated on the visual storyline, the social storyline and the

story imparted through memory. I adapted the framework from Rogers and Scott (2008, p.733) as a lens to view the narrative construction of identity from these three different perspectives and in so doing I unearthed the following key findings. The visual narrative taking place on the school walls provides strong evidence of the Christian ethos and the pastoral care system that permeates the new order. The pictorial artefact representing life in the former pre-amalgamated school demonstrates the diversity and richness of social, cultural, political and historical engagement in meaning making in Coláiste Fionn. The work of subject departments in identity - building is seen as participants collectively negotiate meaning through the interweaving of participation and reification forming new identities. This helps new members like first years to take an active role in making sense of the activities they participate in, and even though they may be challenging for students like Cassy, with support she is enabled. Their identities thicken right before our eyes in art class through the layering of their lived experience in Coláiste Fionn. This layering of identity through meaningful sporting experiences was a key finding of Chapter 6 and this will be extended through the findings unveiled in Chapter 8.

Secondly identity is formed in relationship with others. This research study unveils a unique social space for teachers to author selves in for example the -Thursday Club. Teacher participation in Thursday Club highlights how identities are indeed narratively constructed, represented and performed. The internal narrative in the staffroom that ebbs and flows between colleagues is an important aspect of how staff members build identity. The staffroom is found to be a rich hub of social relations which nurtures identity construction and provides a platform for their representation and performance on a daily basis.

Finally, Rogers and Scott (2008, p.733), assert that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. I found visible evidence of this contention when I looked at teacher memory. A nostalgic flashback to how teachers

perceived play in their former schools revealed how their identities are both established and maintained through narrative. Participation as a source of remembering and forgetting is a kernel for the fashioning of identities. This finding aligns with that of Chapter 6 when we evidenced how participants craft their identities in bespoke sporting moments.

This research demonstrates how, identity is built on the telling of stories about our lives, both to ourselves and to others, and it is through such stories that we make sense of the world, and of our relationship to that world (Lawler, 2008, p.12). In the final findings chapter, I will extend the social aspect of identity formation through taking a deeper looking at the development of self within the communities of practice people participate in. It will help to further illuminate that identity is emergent and performed in the shared social practices of a community.

Figure 8A: Poster promoting the film “grown- ups 2”



Figure 8B: First year Marita's summary of her early days at school

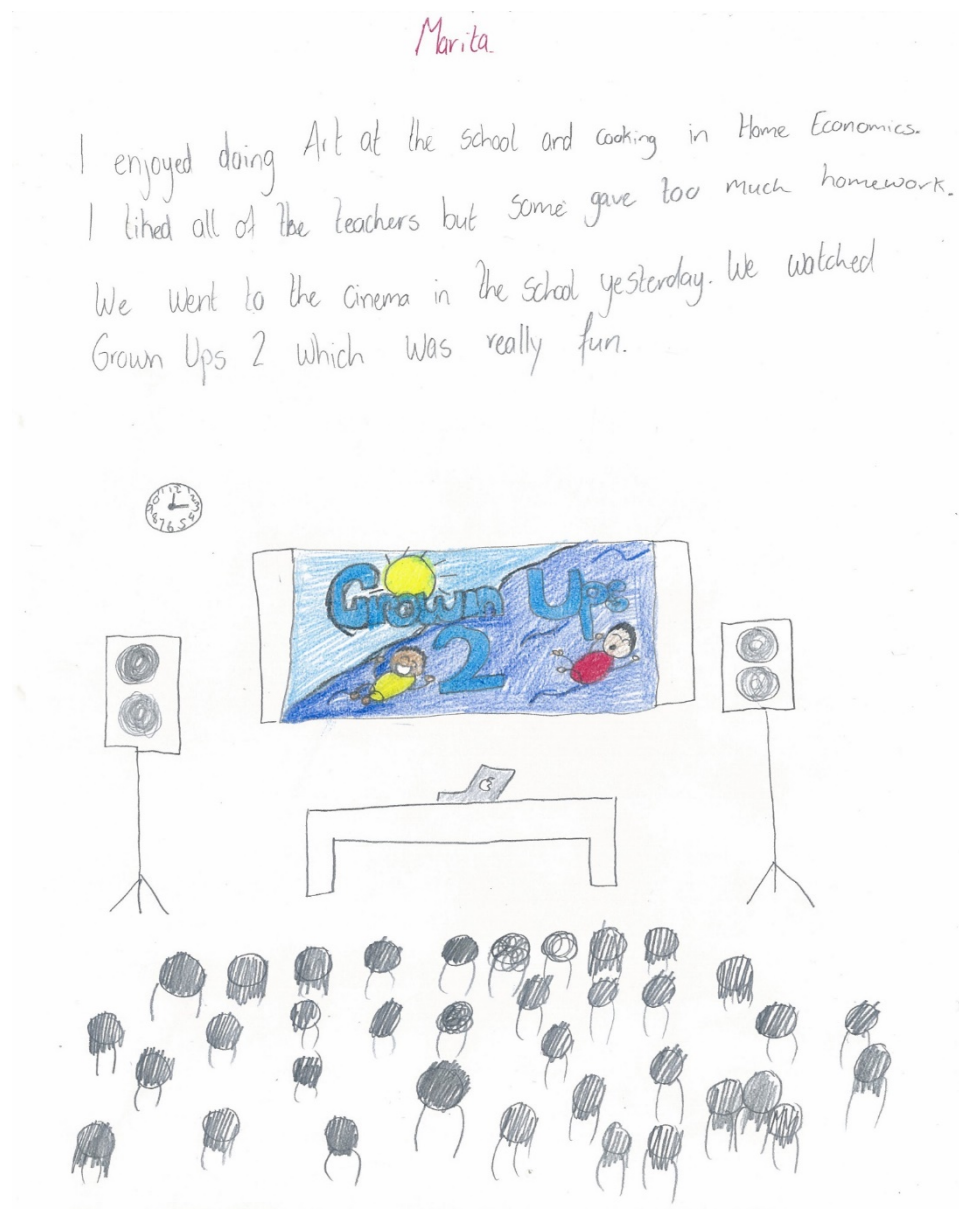


Figure 8C: First year tour to West Cork Secret

West Cork Secret

The Secret is out

Guaranteed a smile

Obstacle courses

Team Building

Bumper Balls

DON'T JUST HAVE A PARTY- MAKE A MEMORY

RECIPE FOR FUN

Change of clothes

Shower Gear

Black Bin Bag

A Good Attitude

Old Shoes

A will to survive

Chapter 8: How Identity is negotiated in Communities of Practice through Mutual Engagement, Joint Enterprise and a Shared Repertoire

Table 8A: Structure of Chapter 8

<p>SECTION 1</p> <p>STAFF</p>	<p>How social mutual engagement makes and unmakes staff in communities of practice?</p> <p>How staff engagement in joint enterprise impacts on identity building in communities of practice?</p> <p>How a staff member gains a positional identity through their active engagement in a community of practice?</p>
<p>SECTION 2</p> <p>STAFF</p>	<p>How newcomers grow their identities through mutual engagement with old-timers?</p> <p>How newcomer identities are transformed through their participation in mutually constitutive practices?</p> <p>How newcomer identities flourish in the caring and supportive staff networks of social relations in communities of practice?</p>
<p>SECTION 3</p> <p>PUPILS</p> <p>OTHER ADULTS</p>	<p>How first years create their own shared history of engagement in communities of practice?</p> <p>How the layers of mud and layers of meaning thicken first year identities?</p> <p>How participants transform their identities in communities of practice?</p> <p>How participation in Communities of Practice can be Challenging?</p>

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Chapter 8

In the process of sustaining a practice, we become invested in what we do as well as in each other and our shared history. Our identities become anchored in each other and what we do together (Wenger, 1998, p.89)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings that illuminate how identity is emergent and performed in the shared practices of a community. I will provide evidence through looking at life in a sample of communities of practice in Coláiste Fionn. I focus at the outset on one school day and then move into sharing a variety of school activities. In Chapter 6 I explored how sport is a pivotal means for crafting identity in the moment-to-moment. In Chapter 7 I provided strong evidence of how identities are both established and maintained through narrative. This chapter serves to extend the evidence that identity is allowed to unfold in everyday spaces (Lave, 1988) as active participants in the practices of social communities construct identities and negotiate meaning in these communities.

This chapter is divided into three key sections. Section 1 provides evidence of social and academic mutual engagement building staff identities. I explore how one staff member gains a positional identity through her active engagement in her community of practice. This section of the chapter addresses how participants' identities grow in communities of practice as they engage in practice through Wenger's framework (1998) of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire.

In section 2, I concentrate on how newcomers to a community of practice learn to become full members through a process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Once the newcomer has gained membership status they participate in group activity through apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995).

It provides strong evidence of how membership of communities of practice indeed translates into an identity as a form of competence.

In the final Section of this chapter I explore how new communities of practice formed during the research year like the school's inaugural Parents Association and the new community of practice formed by the first - years impact on participants' unfolding identities.

The first section of this chapter pinpoints how communities of practice act as a hub of identity formation and transformation in Coláiste Fionn. I will now outline evidence that supports the view that teachers through their social and academic mutual engagement grow their identities. Data is gleaned from a variety of sources ranging from a staff meeting, interview, student diaries and case studies of practice.

A day in a life

I have chosen the events of a particular day in the life of Coláiste Fionn as evidenced by my research. I will show through my findings that communities of practice are important sites for the negotiation of identities in a newly amalgamated school. I have chosen a day when there was normal school until 12.50pm and then the pupils went home early. The staff had their lunch break. School resumed at 2.00pm with a staff talk on Junior Cycle reform. This was followed by a staff meeting. This day in the life of the school illuminates how communities of practice operate on a day-to-day basis. It serves to illustrate some of the main dimensions of how practice is the source of coherence in a community. The pupils depart the school at 12.50pm; they were delighted with this mid-week half day and the escape from the drudgery of afternoon classes. They file down the corridors and the stairways to their cars, buses and means of departure. In a similar manner, the staff exit their classrooms, some make their way straight to their cars or firstly to deposit books in the staffroom and collect some belongings. The majority have made arrangement to meet up for lunch down

town. They have over an hour and this will give them plenty of time to relax with their colleagues, recharge their batteries for the lengthy afternoon ahead.

How social mutual engagement makes and unmakes staff in communities of practice?

8.2 Social mutual engagement- a simple lunch in the staffroom

A small minority of staff remain in the staffroom. All of these staff gather together around the male table. There is a joke shared by one of the male staff members – if you are not at the table you are on the menu! This suggests that there is plenty of gossip exchanged here. Conversation revolved around television viewing the previous evening, family and the sharing of treasured family photos on a mobile phone. The Health Promoting School's link teacher brings along mental health surveys from a 4th year student. The student has contacted this teacher and the survey can be completed on line or on hard copy.

I am a 4th year Social Care student at Cork Institute of Technology. As part of my coursework this year I am carrying out a research dissertation in relation to the promotion of mental health by staff in secondary schools and the influence of outside agencies. The purpose of this short survey is regarding the understanding of mental health among different staff and how mental health is being promoted based on their role within the school. (Mental Health Survey, 4th year Social Care Student – January 2014).

We all grab one. We are like exam students filling them out. There are questions relating to how school experience impacts on mental health. We are reminded to leave the completed surveys on the table when finished. I will now illuminate how Wenger's first dimension of practice-mutual engagement is evident during this everyday lunchtime ritual in the staffroom.

The sharing of lunch together shows how people engage in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another. Membership in this community of practice is a matter of mutual engagement. The discussion of a television programme about a murder, that a staff member had seen prompts conversation about an unresolved local murder. The sharing of personal

stories about family show how community members enable engagement. Being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a community of practice. Mutual engagement creates relationships among people. When it is sustained it connects participants in ways that can become deeper. A community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships (Wenger, 1998, p.76). Colm is willing to share photos of his daughter with other staff members. It is clear that he connects well with the colleagues around him. Whatever it takes to make mutual engagement possible is an essential component of any practice. For teachers, sharing lunch together, being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a community of practice, just as engagement defines belonging. For teachers to work together it is difficult to distinguish between the value of a specific piece of information and the value of the atmosphere of friendliness they create, or between bits of talk about work and the personal exchanges that are woven into the conversations. In order to be a full participant, it may be just as important to know and understand the latest gossip as it is to know and understand the latest circular. Wenger feels that it is work that transforms mutual engagement into a community of practice. This research continues to evidence this work of community maintenance first hand when I examine the staff ritual of the cake party. I contend that events like the organising of staffroom cake parties to mark events contribute to the building of the community that is Coláiste Fionn and also to its maintenance.

8.2.1 The Bumps, Brides & Bye Bye's Party

In this section of the chapter I will develop the theme of how the social mutual engagement of staff enhances their identities in communities of practice. I will examine the staff celebratory ritual of a cake party and illuminate how such a simple activity has an impact on how staff belong, share and participate with one another.

The Bumps, Brides & Bye Bye's Party organised for Thursday May 29th 2014 is a fine example of this. The following email was circulated to all staff by the organiser on May 19th.

On Thursday 29th May (the second last day) the staff will be having "High Tea" aka the Cake Party. Last year we held one for Anne's bridal shower, this year having several brides-to-be on the staff and some baby bumps and some goodbyes to say, they will all be rolled into one cake day. As everyone benefits from the treat of cake in the staffroom, like last year, if as many people as possible could bring something for the cake table it should be quite an enjoyable sugar fix to honour these events. Unofficially it is also to pat ourselves on the back for another year done. (And hopefully enough left-overs to do for the last day too). A table will be set in the centre of the staffroom for Thursday, so donations can be put straight up there when ye arrive on Thursday morning. If anyone is off any of the first 3 classes, they might assist in slicing the cakes to be ready for small break. (email - May 19th 2014).

This practice of the Cake Party ritual exists in the community out of the mutual engagement which is dependent on this specific place and time. The role of such rituals can be understood in terms of community formation. Rituals connect local practices and identities to other locations across time and space. In terms of reification the cake is a sharable artefact. It acts as a boundary object to create fixed points around which to co-ordinate activities. Teachers will exchange stories about how they made their cake. This of course connects with the narrative construction of identity discussed in Chapter 7. These stories are the building blocks of their mutual identity formation and transformation. The above email captures a flavour of much of the life menu that is Coláiste Fionn. There are the inevitable goodbyes to be said at the end of an academic year to community members, as well as the hope of new arrivals in the form of new babies born to community members. The members may belong to many communities of practice but after sustaining enough mutual engagement they will end up creating a locality of their own, even if their backgrounds have little in common. This must never be taken for-granted, even when there is much in common in the respective backgrounds of the participants'. The specific coordination necessary to do things together requires constant attention. This practice of organising cake parties is a source of coherence

in this community of practice. Practice like this does not exist in the abstract. It exists because these teachers are engaging in actions whose meaning they can negotiate with one another. The mundane task of completing a mental health survey is completed as it should ultimately benefit their community membership in this community. It is through dense relations of mutual engagement, like this survey filling and cake making that they form a community of practice. This engagement is a crucial resource enabling the delicate process of negotiating viable identities in this new place - Coláiste Fionn. The cake party ritual and the spectacular arrangements of the cake table, themed differently for each event links well with the visual construction of identity outlined in the previous chapter. There is a “wow” factor on entering the staffroom as staff feast their eyes on the centrepiece. The making of people in the staff of Coláiste Fionn, through the narratives that abound this cake ritual reinforces further Roger & Scott’s contention that identity is formed in relationship with others (Rogers & Scott, 2008). The social experience of the cake party and the excitement surrounding it, within this community of practice resonates with the development of the staff’s identities as members within the group (Hall et al, 2014, 2006).



Figure 8D: Staffroom Cake Party – May 2014

8.2.2 A unique medley of people

In a similar manner to mixing a cake from the varying ingredients, the staff of Coláiste Fionn are a mixed bunch of people. Diversity is a key characteristic of the participants in this community of practice. Some of the teachers have worked in the previous pre - amalgamated schools, their time there varying. Some are new to teaching, some are travelling a long distance, and some live locally. They are different from one another and have different

aspirations and problems. Thus, life in Coláiste Fionn takes on a unique significance in each of their individual lives. They work together. They may or may not see each other every day, and they talk to each other in the corridors and the staffroom. They exchange information and small talk. What makes a community of practice out of this medley of people is their mutual engagement in teaching as they make it happen in Coláiste Fionn. Each participant in a community of practice finds a unique place and gains a unique identity, which is both further integrated and further defined in the course of engagement in practice. These identities become interlocked and articulated with one another through mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p.76). Mutual engagement draws on the competence of the participants themselves as well as the competence of those around them. The contributions and the knowledge of others are important to members as they connect meaningfully to what they don't do and what they don't know. This medley of people is a melting pot that facilitates the negotiation of meaning in informal social spaces. This resonates with the work of Lawler (2008), who contends that identity is socially produced. It is here that community members trade their stories and the gentle kneading of social relationships occurs. The staff are like the mixed media sculptures that have been made by the second year. They too are made from the social, political, historic and cultural resources as discussed in the Chapter 7.

Figure 8E: Mixed Media Sculptures, displayed on the main-stairway – Second Year Art.



The narrative exchanges surrounding the cake parties signify that people are valued and have gained a sense of belonging in Coláiste Fionn. Their families matter and this leads to the moulding of their identities anew. They are made into different people and unmade from the kind of people they were.

The key finding of this section of the chapter is the everyday unfolding of staff identities through their social mutual engagement. The sharing of cake leads to the making of people and their unmaking in their communities of practice in Coláiste Fionn. I will continue to look at this moulding of identities by examining staff academic mutual engagement in the next section of this chapter. Both social and academic mutual engagement are essential building blocks for identity in communities of practice.

8.3 How staff engagement in academic joint enterprise impacts on identity building in communities of practice

I will now continue to explore how the collective engagement of a whole staff in the figured world of doing second level school teaching impacts on their identities in communities of practice. I will also look at how one staff member, Rachel's deep engagement with the task gains her a positional identity in this figured world of academia.

Teachers doing school

The staff gather for the talk on the Junior Certificate reforms. This was given by a Principal from another school. He is introduced to the staff by our Principal. He talked about Junior Certificate Reform and this was followed by a Q&A session. There was concern expressed by one staff member regarding the additional teacher stress and workload the reforms may bring. There was a short break at 3.30pm before the formal staff meeting commenced at 3.45pm. This break gave staff a chance to discuss what they had heard before the next part of the day's proceedings. This is a very important aspect of a shared practice as the participants are connected to each other in ways that are diverse as well as complex. There were mixed feelings toward the Junior Certificate reform proposals and the space to chat freely about them in a non - departmental manner is an opportunity for mutual engagement amongst the staff. Before the formal staff meeting commences the usual staff members gravitate to the

back of the room. This is a safe space to correct, read and browse electronic devices. Meanwhile there is a formal agenda to be worked through. The pre - exam schedule has to be discussed along with school self-evaluation procedures. The circular letter 0063/2013 about school uniforms is on this agenda. There are real opportunities for the staff to engage in the second characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence when there is negotiation of a joint enterprise. School Self-Evaluation is a major aspect on today's agenda. The process is explained to the staff by Rachel. She has to stand up in front of the whole staff and give a presentation on this process of School Self-Evaluation. This is a privileged activity and one that Rachel has willingly undertaken. She gains a positional identity as she speaks and holds the floor throughout the presentation. She speaks with knowledge and facts regarding the whole process for a school. These actions are her indices of claims to privilege. In this group of staff from Coláiste Fionn who are jointly creating and participating in the figured world of Departmental academia, day-to-day practices always position the participants situationally, relative to one another. Rachel has embraced the School Self-Evaluation process but there is no guarantee that all staff will buy into this process. Rachel's knowledge in the area signals here positional difference from the rest of the staff. Rachel now instructs and leads the staff in breaking into their departmental sub-groups. This process which begins at a staff level today will give staff the chance to engage in a joint enterprise. There will be a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement. The school self-evaluation process will allow the school to reflect on its aims, consider criteria for success within its own context and ethos. The main aim is to improve pupil learning. The staff members gather into their department groups. Today's task is to look at strategies to develop numeracy in the subject groups. Alice the newcomer staff member joins her department group. The first task is to write down strengths as regards numeracy in the subject area and then to look at areas that could be worked on. A

questionnaire is to be completed. Joan, the old-timer staff member, pushes the pen and paper in Alice's direction. She willingly accepts that this is her role. She diligently notes down all responses from her colleagues and hands up the completed task sheets. During this sub-meeting, there is much discourse exchanged between the departmental groups. There is discussion on what has been done and worked well in the past as well as what will be tried in the future. The key areas of reflection rotated around departmental strengths, areas for improvement and priorities for action. The following is a sample of the raw data was collected from the departmental self-reflection sheets:

Numeracy plays a big role in Geography; we display numeracy in geography material in classrooms and give options for displaying data in field work. We collaborate with the maths department for field work results and could incorporate the use of silent maps more in the classrooms of Junior Cycle students. All of this is important as numeracy areas of the course include, map work (grid referencing), measuring, area, graphs and charts (Geography Department Self-reflection 15/01/2014).

It is the negotiated response of these departmental colleagues to their situation that belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all the forces and influences beyond their control (Wenger, 1998, p.77). The Geography department colleagues sit closely together as they analyse the strengths of their department and why, the areas that need improvement and why. They also have to prioritise areas for future action and give their reasons as regards why they are important. This activity is the nexus of the negotiation of a joint enterprise and they use their shared departmental repertoire to carry out this task. This completion of the subject department reflection sheet "Teaching and Learning" in our schools is critical to the development and exchange of the shared repertoire that contributes to the teacher's negotiation of meaning in their communities of practice. It is Rachel's job to gather and collate all this information.

Student practice:

The School Self-Evaluation core group designed a first - year student questionnaire on their attitudes to numeracy and engagement in learning. This small teachers' community of practice works on the design, distribution and analysis of the questionnaire. The community of practice that comprises a sample of 23 first year newcomers completed this task.

The findings of this questionnaire highlight students' belief that they can improve their numeracy skills and they feel encouraged by all teachers to develop their own problem-solving strategies. In carrying out this focused task both student and teacher in their own communities of practice exhibit the central characteristics of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. The numeracy initiative was carried out with all first - year students for a two- week period and was then assessed by the Subject Department teachers. Hence all first - year students engaged with numeracy and worked as an active community of practice on improving a numerical aspect of the subject. First year Business Studies students worked on the practice of balancing and this was then assessed with 85% of students deemed to be competent at the task. This clearly demonstrates the academic mutual engagement of students in their communities of practice. This is work that is steered by Rachel and I will now demonstrate how she gains a positional identity within the staff cohort as a result of her deep engagement with school developmental planning.

8.4 How one staff member gained a positional identity through active engagement in a community of practice?

Rachel is the staff member tasked by the Principal to lead a team to develop a School Improvement Plan. This is a small seedling community of practice comprising of the Principal, Deputy Principal, a member of the Maths Department and Rachel. Rachel attends

an in-service and is competent to deliver a presentation to this community of practice as well as to the entire staff as a larger community of practice. She recalls her role in the process:

Initially I focused on the Mathematics Department, enlisting the help of the Teachers of 1st year mathematics classes. Each teacher was tasked with administering a PDST Maths Competency test to their respective classes and collating the results. We then met as a group to review the data and draw conclusions on how to structure our subject planning, i.e. identifying specific areas with-in the mathematics curriculum that would require teaching standardisation and focus in the near term (Rachel, May 2014).

The numeracy initiative is part of Coláiste Fionn's overall planning process. It will build on existing school development planning, evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and help devise a school improvement plan for aspects of practice identified for improvement. Maths and how the teaching and learning in all other subjects support the acquisition of numeracy skills for first year, were reviewed in the second term of the school year 2013/2014. Rachel is a key member of staff pioneering this initiative in Coláiste Fionn. Rachel links with many of the communities of practice in the school. These comprise of school management, Department heads, whole staff as well as the community of practice that is made up of the 2013/2014 first year students. She describes how she advances her plan.

Having completed this I then brought together the Heads of all Departments, outlined what we had concluded and tasked them with completing the process with-in their subject departments. Having completed the process, we have as a school, standardised the approach all departments have in teaching Numeracy in their subject area, with-in the first -year curriculum (Rachel, May 2014).

This enterprise is joint not in that all Coláiste Fionn's staff believes the same thing or agrees with everything, but in that it is communally negotiated. They find a way to complete this task and live with their differences. Participants develop certain expectations about how to interact, how to treat each other, and how to work together. Rachel has to weave many relationships as she negotiates this joint enterprise through the processes of the mutual engagement of participants. There is a shared numeracy repertoire common to many subjects in the curriculum and these include areas like measurement (length/weight), visual aids

(posters/displays). The members of the communities of practice at all levels can relate to this shared repertoire and in doing so it entrenches their membership of the many communities of practice that they belong to in Coláiste Fionn. Teachers become who they are by being able to play a part in the relations of engagement that constitute their community. This is the essence of a negotiated enterprise. Rachel is really pleased with her role in the development of numeracy in the school and she reflects:

By having all 1st year teachers involved in the process supported by their department heads, gave them a sense of ownership and a desire to make the process successful. Each teacher involved also developed an understanding of the process and the principles behind it which will enable them to repeat the process as required. I feel my involvement in it was critical to its success, initially in getting the teams support and then involving the individual teachers. By delegating responsibility to them, it gave them a sense of ownership as well as developing their skill set in analysing the results and working as a team to develop standardised teaching of numeracy (Rachel, May 2014).

Rachel's work on the creation of a School Improvement Plan for Numeracy in Coláiste Fionn is a fine example of how communities of practice operate at many levels in school life.

Rachel speaks about the involvement and therefore mutual engagement of all 1st year teachers. Her Numeracy plan has knit the community of first years and their teachers together as they move toward accomplishing action priorities. The staff of 1st year teachers engages in numeracy actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another. They are empowered with transferable skills that they can carry forward to future actions and future communities of practice. These teachers have transformed their identities as they performed their duties in this numeracy activity. They have evidently become who they are by being able to play their part in the relations of engagement that constitute this community of practice. This numeracy initiative is an example of an action that has come down the pipe from the wider educational community of practice. Rachel's identity has also been transformed through her involvement in this School Self-Evaluation process. She has gained a positional identity relative to the other staff members as a font of knowledge in the area.

Her identity has been demonstrated as fluid and emergent throughout the process. Rachel, the agent has engaged fully in the SSE activity and she has changed both her world and that of the lived world of Coláiste Fionn. Who Rachel is, played out in the context of who she is allowed to be, has influenced in every context the shared resources appropriated in the practices of this very academic task. Hence, I can justify in this research, Lave and Wengers claim from a sociocultural perspective that “agent, activity and the world mutually constitute each other” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.33).

It is also evident that staff engagement in joint enterprise is a transforming force on their identities. In a similar manner, Rachel’s wholehearted engagement with the SSE initiative gains her a strong positional identity through her authoritative voice on the process. This research also vividly portrays how communities of practice are not self-contained entities but develop in larger contexts - historical, social, cultural and institutional, with specific resources and constraints (Wenger, 1998, p.79).

Some of these conditions are explicit whilst others are more implicit. The teachers in Coláiste Fionn find themselves working within the constraints of the school itself, the Education and Training Board, and the Department of Education. But even when the practice of a community is profoundly shaped by conditions outside the control of its members, its day-to-day reality is produced by participants within the resources and the constraints of their situation. This is evidenced at this staff meeting as broader issues are coming down the pipe and have to be discussed in relation to Coláiste Fionn. Two issues that are discussed at this staff meeting are the Circular letter 0063/2013 on school uniforms and circular 00 45/2013 on Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools. All boards of management are now required to immediately commence the necessary arrangements for developing and formally adopting an Anti-bullying policy which fully complies with the requirements of these procedures. As Coláiste Fionn is a newly amalgamated school with an anti-bullying

policy that was recently ratified, only minor changes had to be made to ensure compliance with CL0045/2013. The school Principal and Deputy Principal made the required changes following consultations with staff, the Parents Association and the school's Board of Management. The staff was informed that the revised policy would be presented for ratification at the next Board meeting and a copy of same would be emailed to each staff member. It is only as negotiated by the community that conditions, resources and demands shape the practice. The enterprise of Coláiste Fionn is never fully determined by this outside mandate. The Department have imposed the Circular but it is the members of this community produce a practice to deal with what they understand to be their enterprise. Their practice as it unfolds belongs to their community. It is clear then that the staff of Coláiste Fionn have their identities formed within these multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation (Rogers & Scott, 2008, p.733). This confirms the findings of the Chapter 7. The third characteristic of practice as a source of community coherence is the development of a shared repertoire. This is the binding agent in the social mix of relations. I will now explore how the use of a shared repertoire of practice impacts on identity building Coláiste Fionn.

8.4.1 Shared repertoire

Wenger feels that over time the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning (Wenger, 1998, p.82). One of the main resources for the negotiation of meaning is the shared repertoire of community members. In a teaching sense, this is evidenced at the staff meeting when colleagues gather into their departments to discuss numeracy strengths and weaknesses. Subject specific terms take on a specific usage, the seating arrangements at the staff meeting reflects relationships among people. The enterprise of education is what

gives coherence to the medley of activities, relations and objects involved. The repertoire of this community of practice includes routines like who is the note taker, who chairs the meeting, the gestures, whose voice dominates. It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as expressing their identities as members. The shared repertoire from the pre-amalgamated schools intermingles with the new shared repertoire that has evolved in this new setting of Coláiste Fionn. The first - year students engaging in the numeracy initiative wrestle with the new shared repertoire of their subjects, this repertoire of the community is a resource for the negotiation of meaning. It is shared in a dynamic and interactive sense, as the community members of each subject department and each classroom collectively and individually negotiate its meaning. Teachers using the shared repertoire of their subject organised their submission on how the numeracy initiatives worked out in practice in their classrooms. It is clear that having a shared repertoire for community members is a critical resource in the negotiation of meaning, resulting in transforming their identities in their communities of practice.

To conclude, in this first section of this findings chapter, we have discovered that staff social mutual engagement in events such as cake parties makes and unmakes staff members in their communities of practice. We also see how staff mutual engagement in joint academic enterprise impacts on their identities. We evidence how one staff member, Rachel gains a positional identity among the staff of Coláiste Fionn through her active engagement in the community of practice. The use of a shared repertoire between community members is a key ingredient for their mutual engagement. The effervescent nature of communities of practice with the interaction of the three key elements, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, are clearly demonstrated in these findings as community members see their identities spun and unspun in the moment-to-moment. In the second section of this chapter I

develop my evidence for the negotiation of identities in communities of practice when I focus on newcomer teachers and how they gain a sense of belonging and identity in the communities of practice of Coláiste Fionn.

8.5 How newcomers grow their identities through mutual engagement with old-timers in communities of practice?

Vignette

Sitting by Nelly:

Situated learning:

Alice is warmly welcomed by a senior department colleague Joan. Alice keenly observes Joan over the morning break cuppa in the staffroom. She wonders what age Joan is as she feels that she is nearing the end of her teaching service. Joan gives no indication that she is in anyway weary at this stage in her teaching career. Joan asks Alice about her timetable and then tells her not to worry; she will go through everything with her at the subject planning session in the afternoon. Joan shows Alice around the department classrooms and where all the resources are and subject file is kept. Joan has a rather stylish office located at the end of the corridor. It has a bird's eye view of the entire floor as well as a great view of the school entrance. Joan has no airs and graces about her senior position and invites Alice to use the office if she ever needs to. It is a quite space for corrections and class preparation. At the afternoon's, departmental planning session all the department colleagues are present but it is Joan who really takes Alice under her wing. She goes through Alice's timetable with her explaining the yearly schemes of work and the assessment procedures. She is also eager to receive Alice's fresh ideas for the First-year open evening and how literacy and numeracy could be developed in the subject area. Joan is fearful of a Whole School Evaluation coming down the pipe and all the paperwork must be up to date. Joan makes every effort to inquire

about how Alice is progressing throughout the year. Joan supervises the corridor outside Alice's classroom on a Tuesday morning. Alice's goes to class early before her pupils and Joan always pops in for a chat. At first Alice was a little wary of Joan's presence, she felt she may be checking up on her but she soon realised that Joan was only being friendly. Often Alice would enter the classroom when Joan had finished a lesson. Her whiteboard displays the diligence of her work. Joan is an old-timer who works through the solution on the white board as opposed to using the overhead projector. Alice would observe the good pupil behaviour in Joan's classroom and listen to Joan's explanations. There is a touch of the master about Joan and Alice learns a lot from her. One day Joan had an afternoon medical appointment and works most of the day; she is never out sick and works very hard. This hard work ethic impresses Alice, the newcomer. Alice is sometimes overwhelmed and overawed by Joan, she gazes across the staffroom and feels that Joan has all the wisdom. Her gaze is mirrored by Joan's fears that this new young teacher Alice brings much more energy enthusiasm and exciting teaching methodologies to her classroom.

This departmental meeting that takes place to comply with the school self -evaluation requirements offers its participants opportunities to reshape their identities. This occurs as participants examine the strengths of their subject in the school and why? They also look at areas for improvement and priorities for action. Alice looks back toward her experience as a not so long- a-go student as well as at her last year's PGDE training. Joan on the other hand applies her vast repertoire of teaching experience to this task. These tasks challenge Alice and Joan to reassess their place in the story and reshape their identities in the landscape of practice. Its engagement embodies both a history and a promise of that history. It is a field of possible pasts and of possible futures which are all there for participants. Both the

newcomers and the old timers witness, hear, contemplate and engage with the task at hand. Newcomers like Alice can engage with her own future, as embodied by the old timer Joan. Alice observes how Joan isn't too bothered by all this Junior Certificate Reform. Joan has seen many changes in her teaching career among them the introduction of the Junior Certificate in 1992. Within this community of practice, Joan the old timer teacher delivers the past which included many years teaching in one of the pre-amalgamated schools and she also offers the future through her positive role modelling of her subject. She delivers both the past and the present through her narratives and participation in practice. Alice and Joan both have their story to tell as they give their input into numeracy strengths and weaknesses. Alice has just completed her PGDE and has some fresh ideas to contribute to the group. She has also observed practice in her teacher training. Joan on the other hand has the vast experience of the field. She has tried and tested a lot and knows what has worked best from her knowledge of students and the syllabus. The practice itself gives life to their stories, and the possibility of mutual engagement offers each department colleague a way to enter these stories through their own experience. The work of identity building is ongoing and never to be taken for-granted. Joan and Alice have to work at its creation and maintenance. The relationship between Joan and Alice vividly portrays that of the master and the apprentice. Through their engagement, interactions and participation new identities are born. We can conclude that both Joan and Alice play key roles in the making and unmaking of each - others' identities. I will now continue to explore this special relationship between Joan and Alice as I apply the concept of legitimate peripheral participation to the moulding of their respective identities.

8.5.1 Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Learning is viewed by Lave and Wenger as a situated activity, through a process of legitimate peripheral participation- learners participate in communities of practice and the mastery of the knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. In Coláiste Fionn, legitimate peripheral participation is a way to speak about the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice. It is clear that this participation spawn's rich insights into who is involved in the community; what they do; what everyday life is like; how masters talk, walk, work, and generally conduct their lives; how people who are not part of the community of practice interact with it. It includes an increased understanding of how, when and about what old-timers collaborate, collude, and collide, and what they enjoy, dislike, respect, and admire. This section of the chapter traces how learning is located in the process of co-participation between the newcomer teacher Alice and her senior colleague Joan.

Joan is a senior staff member in the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn. She served in two second level schools in the town, prior to amalgamation and has settled in well to her new home. She feels that the amount of planning and preparation involved in the pre-amalgamation was a key aspect of its success.

One of the major contributory factors to the success of the amalgamation here was the amount of preparation and planning, involving the widest cross-section of interests. From an early stage the staff members of both existing facilities were brought together to plan jointly for, what would ultimately be the success of the new structure, Coláiste Fionn. (Joan, April 2014)

Joan openly embraces the changes to her teaching career that this amalgamation brings. She values the benefits that this new school brings to the community. It brings the promise of the

enhanced delivery of second level education in the catchment area. It will utilise more fully the combined skills of the existing staff of both schools.

While amalgamation was a major change and will not need to be repeated, curricula, methodologies and various aspects of school life change frequently. It is imperative that a school, with the welfare of students and staff to the forefront, embrace change. While the value of changes may be questioned, they cannot be dismissed for the sake of convenience. A good school will always reflect changes in the education system as well as changes in the wider community represented therein. (Joan, April 2014)

The everyday situations that people co-participate in, thereby gaining access to modes of behaviour not otherwise available to them, eventually lead to developing skills adequate to certain kinds of performance. All these situations have the potential to transform the participants even if their trajectories and thresholds of change differ widely. Alice works along - side Joan in the planning and preparation of the room for the school open evening. She listens to Joan's input as she has the experience of many of these evenings behind her. The supporting of junior colleagues comes as a natural part of Joan's job, though she has no formal qualifications in mentoring.

I have no formal qualification in mentoring but would have guided and advised other colleagues to the best of my ability. Frequently younger teachers sought advice or direction and I introduced myself and offered any help or advice (Joan, April 2014).

Joan outlines some of the key areas that she felt young teachers needed the most support in. These areas ranged from behaviour management to resource preparation. Joan was available to support Alice as she navigated the rough terrain of an early year's teacher.

The most frequent problem for young teachers was "bringing it all together". Having the information was not the problem, but many became frustrated with not being able to deliver it meaningfully. Invariably the reason seemed to be poor planning and time management -trying to get too much done in the allotted time (Joan, April 2014).

Alice's opportunities for learning from Joan are given structure by work practices. When they have a brief chat about the First-Year common Christmas test paper, Joan agrees to prepare the short questions if Alice will do the long ones. Joan would like Alice to show her the questions before they are submitted for photocopying and also to furnish her with a copy of the solutions. Joan has a bank of past pre-papers and solutions she offers if Alice would like to select different questions from each. Resource preparation is an aspect of teaching that Joan feels younger teachers need to be aware of.

All teachers need to have resources ready, be competent in their use and clear about how they enhance delivery of the content. Reading text from a slide does not equate to delivering a lesson. Active learning is very important, as students learn best if they are actively involved in questioning, recap, demonstration, explanation to peers and group activities. Many young teachers feel it is adequate to hand out worksheets and notes but the volume of paper imposed on students can be quite off putting (Joan, April 2014).

The support offered by Joan to her junior colleague is viewed as a natural component of her job.

My role as Head of Department meant that I facilitated meetings to co-ordinate and review planning, ensuring that all teachers (and students) were at roughly the same position on the course. This was part of school policy (Joan, April 2014).

Joan had a mentoring and supportive role in her daily work. She carried out the following duties.

I updated student files (school policy) in preparation for school inspection or subject inspection and to have up-to-date information on pupil progress. I was available to teachers who felt that I may be of assistance to help, advise or encourage students who showed consistent lack of interest or engagement. This extended also to students demonstrating challenging behaviour or disrupting the progress of the class (Joan, April 2014).

We can see that Joan actively carried out her professional duties, like updating files, but it is also noteworthy that she extended herself personally and professionally to both her colleagues

and pupils to try and sort out personal difficulties for them. This role is deemed very important to Joan in the execution of school life in Coláiste Fionn.

Along with the welfare of students, the welfare of staff is of a concern for everybody. A good staffroom must be inclusive and welcoming and in the absence of a teacher welfare system it becomes the responsibility of all (Joan, April 2014).

Joan took Alice “under her wing” from the moment she arrived into the staffroom. She brought her into the community of practice and through the motions of mutual engagement and joint enterprise Alice conquered the unknown. Joan opened up her practices to Alice so that she could engage in the shared repertoire of this community. Alice’s relationship with Joan was the kernel that helped Alice absorb and become absorbed in the practices of this community of practice.

8.5.2 Absorbing and being absorbed

Newcomers’ legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an observational lookout post. It involves participation as a way of learning, of both absorbing and being absorbed in *the culture of practice*. An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners like Alice with opportunities to make the culture of the practice theirs. The apprentice gradually assembles an idea of what constitutes the practice of the community. Joan helps Alice come to grips with the challenges of a newcomer teacher. Joan’s advice with regard to behaviour management was steeped in the value of planning. She felt that three key questions would be a great help to Alice.

What do I aim to teach?
How do I aim to teach it?
When and how do I assess it?

Alice is a little clearer on how to approach each lesson with this structure in mind. Joan is also cognisant of the need to observe a clear professional distance between the class and the

teacher. Joan has always found a high level of both interest and enthusiasm in Junior colleagues but is conscious of the need to support them in the school setting.

I always found a high level of interest and enthusiasm among young teachers. Many young (and not so young) teachers become frustrated at times and some supports should be put in place to help them through difficult times. All departments' personnel should meet regularly to discuss progress, exchange ideas and provide personal support for one another (Joan, April 2014).

8.5.3 New practices acquired, shared and extended

Hence through peripherality and legitimacy actual participation is made possible and it is through this process that newcomers like Alice become included in a community of practice. As practice is a shared history of learning new members play catch up in joining. They interact when organising common examination papers, do things together like organising the open evening, negotiate new meanings regarding curricular reforms and learn from each other. Communities of practice reproduce themselves in the same way as they came about in the first place. They share their competence with new generations through a version of the same process by which they develop. Joan was a newcomer to Colaiste Fionn as a newly amalgamated second level school. Alice is a new newcomer as she is both new to teaching as well as to Coláiste Fionn. There are shared histories of practice as well as new ones acquired, shared and extended. Lave and Wenger talk about shared participation, as the stage in which the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the established and the hopeful, act out their differences and discover their commonalities, manifest their fear for one another, and come to terms with their need for one another (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.116). Each threatens the fulfilment of the other's destiny, just as it is essential to it. Conflict is experienced and worked out through a shared everyday practice in which differing viewpoints and common stakes are in interplay. This is evidenced in Coláiste Fionn through the daily interactions of Joan, Alice and their colleagues. The move of learners like Alice toward full participation in a community of practice does not take place in a static context.

The practice is itself in motion. Since activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives are mutually constitutive, change is a fundamental property of communities of practice and their activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.117). The inexperience of the newcomer can be an asset to be exploited, when supported by experienced practitioners like Joan who both understand its limitations and value its role. When this continual interaction of new perspectives is sanctioned, everyone's participation is legitimately peripheral to a degree. Everyone can be considered a newcomer to the future of a changing community of practice.

Hence the person, Alice, has been correspondingly transformed into a practitioner, a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skill, and discourse are part of a developing identity - a member of a community of practice. Joan, as an old-timer but a newcomer to this newly amalgamated school, has grown through her mentoring and support of Alice. The practice of identity building is always fluid and in a state of flux as seen in chapter 6 and now demonstrated here in the identity development of Alice and Joan.

I will now explore a few of the concepts highlighted by Wenger (1998) which I feel advance our understanding of how learning constitutes trajectories of participation connecting the past and the future in a process of individual and collective becoming in Coláiste Fionn. It also helps our understanding of how Alice and Joan's identities unfold within their communities of practice.

8.5.4 Trajectories- a constant becoming

The work of identity is always ongoing. Our identity is something we constantly renegotiate during the course of our lives (Wenger, 1998, p.154). Wenger contends that as we participate in practice, one moves through trajectories. This trajectory is not a path that can be foreseen,

but one that has a momentum of its own. It has a coherence through time that connects the past, the present, and the future. These department colleagues are on various trajectories. Alice the newcomer is on an inbound trajectory. She has joined the community of Colaiste Fionn with the prospect of becoming a full participant in its practice. Her identity is invested in her future participation, even though her present participation may be peripheral. I feel Joan is on an insider trajectory but on her way to an outbound trajectory. She has full membership of this community by virtue of her long serving participation in its practices. But the evolution of the practice continues - as evidenced by the Junior Certificate Reform proposals and the drafting of a numeracy plan on today's agenda. There are new events, new demands and new generations all creating occasions for renegotiating Joan's identity. Joan is nearing retirement and this is her final year teaching. She is on a trajectory that will lead her out of her community. Being on the way out of a community involves developing new relationships. Joan must find a different position for herself with respect to this community of practice. She must view the world and herself in new ways.

8.5.5 Generational encounters

Learning in practice involves negotiating an identity. This identity incorporates the past as well as the future. It is in each other that the newcomers and the old timers find their experience of history. Alice is forging her own identity. She must find a place in relation to the past, in order to fully participate in this practice. She must gain some access to the very history she wants to contribute to. Wenger does not see newcomers as being more progressive than old timers. They do not seek to change the practice any more than established members do. They desperately try to connect to a history they were not part of constructing. Alice was never part of the pre-amalgamated schools, nor did she participate in the joint staff planning days that took place for two years prior to amalgamation. She is a

new teacher, with little teaching experience. She is a fragile participant and makes every effort to include some of that history in her own identity. Old timers like Joan have a rich investment in their practice. She is embroiled in the politics of her community and has grown in confidence from years of participation in a history she knows only too well. Joan invests in the present not so much as to continue it, but so as to give it new life. She welcomes the potential afforded by new generations of teachers like Alice who are less hostages to the past. In this generational encounter, there is room for both Alice and Joan to fashion their identities. Because a community of practice is a system of interrelated forms of participation, discontinuities propagate throughout (Wenger, 1998, p.90). When newcomers join a community of practice we unveil the generational discontinuities that spread through multiple levels and relations that shift in a cascading process. As these newcomers and old timers interact some of the history of the practice remains embodied in the generational relations that structure the community.

I will now present further confirming evidence that newcomers grow their identities in the caring and supportive networks of social relations discovered in the previous chapter. I will do this through examining further how new newcomer teachers James, Mattie and Alice gain their place in their new communities of practice.

8.6 How newcomers are transformed by participating in mutually constitutive practices

The Practice of Becoming

Rogoff tells us about how teachers, the activities that they carry out and the institutional context of schools like Coláiste Fionn are entwined. She feels that they are mutually constitutive. Her theory sheds light on how individuals, groups, and communities transform as they are together constituted by sociocultural activity. Her participatory metaphor

emphasises the importance of the inter-relationship of the personal and the social. The metaphor of apprenticeship is evidenced in Coláiste Fionn as James is on teaching practice in the practical subjects of woodwork and metalwork. He advances his skill and understanding through participation with the other staff members of these subjects. James is supported and empowered by his colleagues to the extent that he becomes a more responsible participant. The concept of guided participation refers to the processes and systems of involvement between people as they communicate and coordinate efforts while participating in culturally valued activity. This is evidenced within departments in the school like the Maths Department, as team-teaching is carried out. Two teachers work side by side in a classroom to advance learning, they share resources, collaborate on a teaching plan, correct tests and give feedback to students and parents. Rogoff uses the term “participatory appropriation” to refer to the process by which individuals transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation. Hence the newcomer teachers Alice and Mattie participated in school life and will handle subsequent events in their teaching careers in ways based on their experiences in Coláiste Fionn. Alice wrestled with the discipline issues involved in teaching boys. She was supported by colleagues and grew as a teacher from the experience. She talks about how she toughening up and this would stand to her as a teacher as she moves on to another teaching post.

I qualified in May 2012, so I had already one year done before this of maternity leave in an all girl’s school, so it was quite different. I had to deal with kinda behaviour I wasn’t used to dealing with from the last school, so while it was torture at times, it was a good experience as it toughened me up. I’m not taking things as personnel as I used to last year, which is a good thing going forward (Alice, May 2014).

As Alice reviews her teaching performance in Coláiste Fionn this year she feels that she has grown as a teacher with regard to her new layer of toughness and her perspective on classroom life. She welcomes the support she received in the school community and going

forward is a different kind of teacher. Her identity has been layered with the experience of teaching in this school environment.

I think I got good support from the vice-principal and other teachers. I suppose at the start I was kind of afraid to say anything in case it made me look bad, but you learn very quickly that you can't survive on your own. It's not only you that students are misbehaving for so it was a good experience (Alice-May 2014)

Alice quickly realises that trying to cope on her own as a newcomer teacher with the mammoth challenges of classroom discipline is not a good idea. When she confides in the Deputy-principal and her colleagues she is supported and empowered to be a better teacher. She is transformed by the challenges of this teaching practice and in so doing transforms the practice of teaching in Coláiste Fionn.

Mattie had experience of teaching only in a fee-paying school where his students were not as hard to reach. This is Mattie's second year teaching and again he found classroom discipline challenging.

Different kind of setup here. It was a private school, a fee- paying school, so discipline in the classroom wouldn't have been as much of an issue (Mattie, April 2014).

In Coláiste Fionn he was presented with different students but conquered the challenges and felt that it was a positive experience.

The students I suppose you kinda remember some of them in that maybe not too taken by the books and stuff, but some of my classes but at the same time good lads and they'd do anything for you in that kind of a way. So, the salt of the earth kinda lads...not taken by the books yeah (Mattie, April 2014).

Mattie realises that not all pupils are the same and he has to adjust his discipline regime and teaching expectations accordingly. Both Alice and Mattie have become different kinds of teachers and have transformed and been transformed by the practice of teaching in Coláiste Fionn. The agent, the activity and the world are truly, mutually constitutive. The findings of

this section of the chapter also confirm that newcomer teacher identity flourishes in the caring and supportive networks of social relations of Coláiste Fionn.

In this second section of the chapter we can see that identity is negotiated as newcomers are smelted into old-timers, through mutual engagement as they become absorbed in the practices of doing teaching. The newcomer Alice's identity is transformed through her relationship with the old-timer Joan. The findings of this section of the chapter also confirm those of the Chapter 7 in highlighting how newcomer teacher identities flourish in the caring and supportive network of social relations in Coláiste Fionn. In the final section of this chapter I will now explore the negotiation of identity in newly formed communities of practice that spawned in Coláiste Fionn during the research year. I will address how the cohort of first-year pupils forming a unique community of practice and the establishment of the inaugural Parents Association impact on participant identities. These findings will help to copper-fasten my belief that communities of practice are indeed the homes of identity building.

8.7 Newly formed Communities of Practice in Coláiste Fionn

How first years create their own shared history of engagement in a newly formed community of practice?

The First Years of Coláiste Fionn have formed a new community of practice as evidenced from posters summarising their first nine weeks in the school. The posters created by the students at the end of their first half term give us an indication of what life is like for them in their new community of practice. Some students comment about their new subjects, and how life has changed for them since leaving their old communities of practice in primary school.

I have enjoyed the last 8 weeks of Secondary School. My favourite subjects are French and English. I have made many new friends. The teachers are very nice here. Secondary school is a lot more enjoyable than Primary school because of the different subjects and new people. At first, I was scared, but when I knew what class I was in and who was in my class I was fine. The subjects I choose were Art, Home economics and Business Studies. I enjoy them all but my favourite is Art. My first 8 weeks were very enjoyable and I am looking forward to the rest of the year (Máiréad, 25/10/13).

The student experience of the first few weeks in Coláiste Fionn is summarised by Máiréad who appears to have settled in well. She is happy with her transition from Primary school and enjoys her new subjects and the new people in her environment. She is excited as she looks forward to the year ahead.

Figure 8F: Life as first year in Coláiste Fionn



TeSS

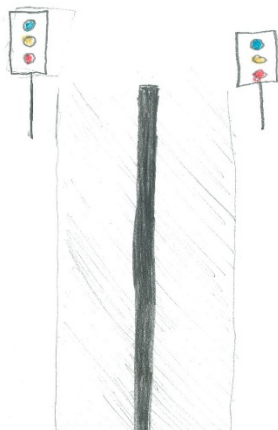
25/10/13

At Coláiste Fionn my favourite

Subjects are History and English.

I really like the canteen because the food's really nice and cheap.

The pitch is really nice and I love doing P.E up there. I don't like the traffic lights just before the school.



The significant elements of the first 9 weeks in school and pinpointing the formation of new communities of practice are: Learning, meaning and identity building. The following are the key ingredients of community of practice formation in Coláiste Fionn.

Meeting new friends

Having new teachers,

New subjects

Sausage rolls in the canteen

Tag rugby blitz in Limerick

Moving from class to class

Length of the class -35 mins if you don't like a subject, you're not there for long.

Cross country race in Dunmanway

Saying the Rosary

Cooking an apple crumble, cupcakes and scones

Lots of tests

Longer school days and school sports have made me tired

Eating nearly double what I had before

Lunchtime basketball league

Together all of the above events and practices form meaning making opportunities for the newcomer first years. It is in these and through these events that they become made and unmade by each other in this newfound space. One of the main bonding events exclusive to first years was the showing of the film – Grown-ups 2 at the end of the first half term. This was organised as an Action Plan by the schools Link Modules pupils as a fundraising activity for Cystic Fibrosis. Since moving to Coláiste Fionn one of the school's pupils died from the disease. It was a fun activity for all First years and the cinema experience was re-created in L1/08 A+B. the students could sit on the floor with their friends and watch the big screen. It

was definitely one of the highlights of their first weeks in school. Saoirse recalls this memory as being very special for her.

The highlight of my first 9 weeks was watching the movie Grown Ups 2 which was screened in L1/8a L1/8b. all the money funded was in aid of Cystic Fibrosis, which is a very, very good cause (Saoirse, 25/10/13).

The screening of the film Grown Ups 2 was a very apt choice for the First Years they have out grown their Primary schools and have settled into their new communities of practice. The watching of this film by all of the First years at the conclusion of the first half term is a great opportunity for the year group to engage in a joint enterprise. This film allows the First years to share a collective process of negotiation. It is their negotiated response to this movie and belongs to them in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control. This film is a reification of the process of growing up for our First years who have made the transition to their new world. It is their participation in the shared practice of watching it together that facilitates their negotiation of meaning. Participation and reification are dual modes of existence through time. Even though they interact they exist through time in different realms. The film will play on even if Saoirse and Mairéad chat or day dream for a moment. They both remain participants in this community of practice as the forms of participation and reification converge and diverge in a shared space. These moments of convergence and divergence continue throughout their first academic year. In the moments of negotiation of meaning, they come into contact and affect each other. They shape each other like the dough in the Home Economics lesson but they are not bound to each other. They unfold in different modes until they meet again in new moments of negotiation. The First years as a newly formed community of practice are beginning to create their own shared history of engagement that will layer on the histories of engagement of this group of First years as well as previous groups of First years in Coláiste Fionn. Their shared history of engagement will also become a resource for the negotiation of meaning among members of

this community of practice. As evidenced from some of the activities that the First years have engaged in, in their short time in this school we can see that communities of practice provide a locus for engagement in action. This could be on the playing fields with tag rugby or in the Home economics room making a simple apple crumble. communities of practice are also a locus for interpersonal relations, shared knowledge with the learning of new subjects like French and the negotiation of enterprises. This community of practice formed from the First years in Coláiste Fionn holds the key to its member's transformation. It is with these communities that meaning is negotiated in practice. We observe how this community of practice evolved through the school year through the joint negotiation of meaning in the activities that the First years participate in.

The First - year Christmas party is another opportunity for this community of practice to engage in a joint enterprise and craft a shared repertoire. The repertoire is built from the stories created during the afternoon, produced and adopted from the practice. It includes the discourse by which the First-years create meaningful statements about their new world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as new members of this community. The First-year party is an annual event in the history of Coláiste Fionn, and one of the central aspects of the afternoon is the Secret Santa exchanges between the pupils in each class. The class tutors gather the gifts ahead of the party and each pupil is guaranteed to receive a gift. The schools Religion Department play a central role in organising the event. The TY and 5th year mentors are present to again link up with the First-years through the Meitheal programme. The pupils are allowed wear a Christmas jumper today to add to the festivities. Samantha writes in her diary about the Christmas party as one of the key aspects of her week.

This week we had a First-year Christmas party, we did Secret Santa. I got a Cadburys selection box, 2 body washes and a body lotion. We played games, danced to music and ate A LOT of sweets. That was Wednesday. On Thursday, we had confession and now Friday we are starting our tests (Samantha,13/12/13).

Wenger feels that the repertoire of practice is a resource for the negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 1998, p.83). As the First - year classes intermingle with each other on the dance floor of the PE hall, the repertoire of this community of practice is shared in a dynamic and interactive social space. The first-year Christmas party is an occasion for the spawning of new meaning for its participants. This community of practice is positioned within the broader institutional system of Coláiste Fionn, but at an event like this party the day-to-day reality of the community of practice is produced by its participants, the first-year pupils within the resources and constraints of their situation. Being included is what matters and is a requirement for being engaged in this community of practice. The Religion Department ensures that all First-years receive a Secret Santa gift by buying a few extra selection boxes in case any pupil forgets to bring their gift. The senior mentors also ensure that all the First-years have a happy experience and no one feels left out. The First-year Christmas party illuminates the key characteristics of Wenger's communities of practice, the mutual engagement of participants, the sharing of a joint enterprise and the exchanging of their shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

8.7.1 A day in the lives of First Years school tour- 13/05/2014.

How the layers of mud & layers of meaning thicken first year identities?

Our school tour was on Tuesday! It was so fun. We smelled really, really bad. It was one of the highlights of the year (Hannah,16-5 -14).

The West Cork Secret is a magical hideaway tucked between the villages of Kilbrittian and Timoleague. It is one of Corks leading activity centres combining the serenity of the

beautifully landscaped gardens with the excitement and adventure of the activity park. This was the venue for the First-year school tour. The making of memories was easy for the First-years as they embarked on their day of mud and fun. The recipe for a great experience was spelt out in the itinerary for the days outing.

Recipe for fun

- ✓ Change of clothes (wet suits are ideal)
 - ✓ Shower gear
 - ✓ Black bin bag
 - ✓ A good attitude
 - ✓ Old shoes
- ✓ A will to survive

The doing of things together connects participants to each other and builds relationships in communities of practice. It is also an opportunity for the flourishing of identities. Lauren is one of these first-years and her account of the tour represents the salient elements of communities of practice.

My name is Lauren and I am in first year in Coláiste Fionn. For my school tour I went to West Cork Secret with my class. The school tour was in May so it was a nice way to end the school year before my exams. We had to get a bus from the school to West Cork Secret, it was great fun. I sat next to my friend Mary and we chatted with the people around us. The journey didn't seem long at all (Lauren, 20/5/14).

The First-year school tour takes place in May at the conclusion of the school year. By now each participant in this First-year community of practice has found a unique place and gained a unique identity in Coláiste Fionn which is further integrated and further defined by engagement in practices like this fun event of going on the school tour. The first-years get an opportunity to mingle with other first-years that they may know little about.

When we got to West Cork Secret we met Shane, who was our instructor for the day. He was really nice and he split us up into teams. Mary and I were put on different teams but that was ok, we spent the day trying to beat each other in the competitions. There were 5 people on my team, Anne, Shelly, John, Paul and me. Shane explained that each team would get points for where they finished in each activity and that the team with the most points would win (Lauren-20/5/2014).

The first-years identities become interlocked and articulated with one another through their mutual engagement in events like the orienteering and the slippery slide of West Cork Secret. There is the opportunity to engage with fellow First-years on the bus and then the group is divided into the day's activities. There is an element of healthy competition as the year group is divided into teams and it is easy to see how teams are doing on the score board at events like orienteering. The groups are allowed to give their own name to the team and this adds to their identities as a group. There is joint enterprise displayed at the orienteering as each clue has to be carefully analysed before setting off to find it. There is a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of this mutual engagement.

The first activity we had was orienteering. We did some orienteering in PE earlier this year so we had an idea of how it should work. We had to draw symbols onto a piece of card that we had. There were 6 teams and each team were sent off 1 minute apart. We were the 4th team to go, so this gave us time to plan our route. We ran for as much as we could but we got lost in one of the mazes. After that we went a little slower and spent a bit more time reading the map. When we got back there were two teams there before us, it was very exciting waiting for the other teams and to find out where we finished. We were first, so we got 6 points! (Lauren-20/5/2014).

This negotiation of Joint Enterprise is further defined by the First-years' negotiated response to the challenges of the situations presented to them like navigating down the crazy river.

Next, we played a milking game and pedalling go-karts. Only 2 teams could play at a time so it meant that we got a break at first and could watch our friends try the game. It was great fun, we had to milk water out of a barrel and try fill a pipe to the top. The winning team got a point each time. For the go-karts we had to race around the track and collect tokens. The team with the most tokens won. It was brilliant. Everyone was cheering (Lauren, 20/5/2014).

The obstacles course and the slippery slide are all fun challenges to be overcome. The First-years are accompanied by their class tutors and year heads and they either observe or participate with the First years.

The last two games for points were the skiing game and the mini-obstacle course. The skiing game was hilarious, we kept falling down we were terrible but it was the most fun. The mini-obstacle course was the last game for points. We were 4th, but we all tried as hard as we could and we finished second overall. We had to scabble under cargo nets and then climb a big bank and slide down into a pool of muddy water. That was scary as we didn't know how deep it was. After that Shane announced the winning team and said we would start the two large obstacle courses and that we would finish with the really big slide (Lauren, 20/5/2014).

Wenger feels that over time the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for the negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 1998, p.82). This is evidenced in Lauren's account of the obstacles course. The teams have bonded together throughout the course of the previous activities and now the repertoire of this community of practice includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world as well as expressing their identities as members. This shared repertoire is a resource for the negotiation of meaning as the first years navigate through the muddy obstacle course.

The first obstacle course had loads of little slides. I went around it with my friends. It was great fun, and we got destroyed. We were all covered in muddy water, from our head to our toes. I've never laughed so much before in my life. The second obstacle course was through some woods. We had to go slower on this one. We did things like climb through big tractor tyres, and concrete pipes, walk through car tyres, and swing on monkey bars. I felt like a soldier at boot camp. After that we were getting a bit tired. Shane took us up the big slide and turned on the water, it was massive. He explained that you had to put a piece of foam under you to go down it. I was really nervous but kind of excited too. We lined up, there was a lot of laughter and chatter. It was amazing watching how fast people could go on it. When it was my turn I sat on the foam and pushed off, I went really, really fast and at the end spun in circles before going into the plunge pool. It was epic. I went to line up again straight away. I had three more turns before we finished (Lauren, 20/5/2014).

Following a roasting hot shower, the day concludes with the eating of fresh home-made pizza from the clay oven.

Shane brought us to the shower area and told us that we had 30 minutes to get ready. There was a lot of mud to be washed off. We all showered and put on clean clothes. We went out to the reception area and what a surprise, there were lovely pizzas ready for us. One of the teachers made a little speech saying that we had a great day and were very thankful to Shane for making it so fun. We all clapped and cheered. After that it was time to get the bus back to school. It was a brilliant day! (Lauren, 20/5/2014).

The pizza is shared out like the shared repertoire exchanged between the group. Today's unique experience of good old-fashioned fun was all about encouragement, setting targets, motivation, character building and reward. This was experienced from the assault course to the forest run. There was much smiling through the mud as old identities were moulded and new identities formed. As the layers of mud filtered down the shower tray, the participants were refreshed anew through their participation in the practices and challenges of the day's teambuilding activities. Fuelled by the pizza and the golden memories of the day the pupils armed with their black bin bags dash homeward to the awaiting bus. It is evident from their student diary entries that the school tour was a great fun day out where the first-year community of practice was further consolidated. Student identities are performed and lived in this everyday space as students slide down the slide and glide across the monkey bars. The fun activities of today's itinerary are the fuel for the negotiation of meaning and identity transformation of the first years.

The school tour was so much fun. The obstacle courses were so fun but I was filthy after. I can't believe there's only 2 weeks left (Rachel, 16/5/2014).

We went on our school tour on Tuesday. It was great fun. There was a huge water slide. There were 2 obstacle courses and we had to do orienteering. It was great fun because you got all mucky, too. I fell right under water (Marita, 16/5/2014).

Hence events like today show how a community of practice is a living context that openly invites the personal experience of engagement by participants through which they incorporate that competence into an identity of participation. This cohort of first year pupils are different people travelling home on the school tour bus to when they travelled on that same bus in the

morning. They are changed, changed utterly as a result of their simple participation in today's activities. Their identities have developed and are transformed in the moment-to-moment. The evidence of this section of chapter confirms that the layers of mud have left their vestiges and have thickened the identities of this cohort of first years into the different kind of people they have become. The social experience and the oral narrative that ensues has played its part in the negotiation of their identities. In a similar fashion, though-out their first year in Coláiste Fionn the first-years have become anchored in each other and what they have done together. The small stories of the watching of the film *Grown Ups 2*, the experience of the Christmas party and finally the exhilarating challenges of one day in the lives of first years, the West Cork Secret experience prove pupils become invested in what they do as well as in each other. Finally, I will explore the formation of a different kind of community of practice, the inaugural schools' Parent Association and how it impacts on the identity of Coláiste Fionn.

8.7.2 How participation in the schools' parent's association is identity transforming

Appendix 17- Parents' Association

Another newly formed community of practice in the research year was the school's Parent's Association. The Parents Association is a formal structure that allows parents to participate in the life of the school. The full details of its formation are outlined (see appendix 18). The social relations of the parents within this community of practice changes through their direct involvement in activities and in the process, the parents understanding and knowledgeable skills develop.

The Parents Association of Coáiste Fionn is a way of engaging parents in a meaningful practice. Parents' learning takes place as they participate in organising the various seminars and workshops. It is through the actions and interactions of their meetings that day-to-day

engagement in practice occurs. This engagement is then embedded in the culture and practice of the larger organisation that it represents - Coláiste Fionn. In so doing it transforms the social structure in which it takes place. The Parents Association actively uses the school website as a window into their activities and as a link with parents. There is an open invitation on the web page to parents:

Please help us make our school even better, if you have any ideas, questions or you wish to contribute/volunteer to help in any way you can contact us in the following ways:

In Person: Please approach any of the Committee members directly.

By Hand/Post: Drop a note in an envelope into the office at the school for the attention of the Parents Association (Coláiste Fionn website, June 2014).

The Parents Association is a newly formed community of practice in Coláiste Fionn in 2013; it is a means of negotiating identities in the school. The annually elected committee is made up of core members of this community of practice but all parents of pupils in the school have a peripheral kind of membership of this community of practice. Emma, a parent of school going children to Coláiste Fionn found herself involved in this organisation. Following her attendance at the first meeting she was elected Vice-Chairperson and held the position of Chairperson for two subsequent academic years. She found that there were great benefits to being involved in this association.

I gained an insight into various aspects of the school day, the challenges, the issues and the positives. I felt there were benefits to being involved. The Parents Association was more informal on school matters. I formed relationships with parents that were not previously known to me and we continue to meet occasionally (Emma, May 2014).

Emma was involved in three Primary School Parent Associations in the town and continues to value the importance of such organisations.

I recognise the importance of parents and teachers working together for the benefit of children, teachers and parents. I felt more connected and involved with my children as they always knew I had an interest in their education and welfare (Emma, May 2014).

Similar to all communities of practice there was a shared repertoire between members on how to function as a partner association in school life. Emma reflects on the practice of communicating with school management.

The Chairperson emailed the Principal on issues raised by parents. This was followed by a meeting of two Parent Association representatives, Principal and Vice-Principal. This was where issues were discussed and there was an opportunity to appreciate and hear about school issues (Emma, May 2014).

The main activities that Emma was involved in during her role in the Parents Association included arranging its many conferences and parent forums. The parent forums were an opportunity for parents to voice concerns. She was also involved in the arrangement of refreshments at school functions such as the School Awards Night and Graduation Mass. Emma's membership of this newly formed community of practice in the school is a good example of a nexus of multi-membership. She brings her past history of involvement in many former parent associations to this new association. She is also a parent of children in the school.

8.7.3 A Nexus of Multi-membership unfolds

We all belong to many communities of practice, some past, some current, some as full members, and some in more peripheral ways. Some may be central to our identities whilst other may be more incidental. All these various forms of participation contribute to the production of our identities. This is true for the parents, pupils and teachers of Coláiste Fionn. The parents like Emma in the Parents Association are first and foremost parents to their own children, members of community organisations to name but a few communities of practice to which they belong. The pupils are members of the community of practice that is their family and other community organisations ranging from the GAA club to the Rugby club. The teachers are members of their own families and organisations relating to both their

professional and private lives. Parent, pupils and teacher membership of any community of practice is only a part of their identities. As they participate in the communities of practice related to Coláiste Fionn they interweave their participation in other communities of practice similar to the delicate sewing together of a patchwork quilt. Their exchanges through mutual engagement and the repertoire used continually reflect their participation in other practices. Students may talk about the club game they played in football over the weekend; teachers may talk about what they learned from the subject association's weekend conference or parents about what is happening at a local fundraiser. Wenger justifiably feels that an identity is far more than just a single trajectory, but rather a nexus of multi-membership. We can see through this research that people engage in different practices in each of the communities of practice to which they belong. They often behave differently in each of them, construct different aspects of themselves, and gain different perspectives. Hence Emma's involvement in the parent's association of Coláiste Fionn provides strong evidence of the nexus of multi-membership that shapes communities of practice and their home for identities (Wenger, 1998, p.252).

Hence, this research points to the identity transforming effects that involvement in communities of practice has on ordinary people like Emma.

The final section of this findings chapter looked at newly formed communities of practice in the research site. The first years are seen to create their own shared history of engagement before our very eyes as they perform their identities through their participation in events like watching *grown-ups 2*, their Christmas party and the ultimate school tour. They become made into different people as they participate in the shared collective process of negotiation. The formation of the school's parent association has a transforming effect on the people who actively engage in its day-to-day activities as well as the lives of the parents and pupils it

supports. I can firmly conclude that identity is emergent and performed in the shared practices of a community.

8.8 Academic Narrative around tests- teachers and pupils:

This section of the chapter explores the challenges for newcomer teachers and first year pupils to participate in the academic practice of testing. It examines the importance of testing both for the teacher and the pupil. This testing took place on a weekly class basis as well as the more formal Christmas and Summer exams. The narrative surrounding testing for newcomers highlights how this practice challenges participants as they struggle to gain a heightened sense of belonging. The narrative that takes place between pupil and pupil and teacher and teacher as well as pupil and teacher is a way in which identities are formed in this new place. Newcomer teachers like Alice and Mattie become schooled in what old-timers consider a good way to be in the practice of examination preparation and correction. They experience themselves as belonging and as legitimate participants. Etienne Wenger talks about the delicate balance and dance of the self that is involved in straddling the known and the unknown. This is a newly amalgamated school and it is a new place for all participants. Practices are established and set out in relation to scheduling, format and timing of in - house examinations. It is through the medium of these practices that meaning is negotiated and identities are built. I demonstrate that first ear pupils like Bob positions himself and is positioned by others as “not able” and “not learned” and not successful in school. Teachers like Alice help to co-construct his success and failure through the testing practices of the school system.

The landscape of practice:

This meaning is negotiated at a micro level between teachers but there is also a macro narrative taking place between the Senior Management teachers in Coláiste Fionn. They decide the broad strokes of practice and this is evidenced in the April's staff meetings agenda where the Summer Exams are one of the main points discussed. The following was recorded in the minutes of this staff meeting:

Principal informed the members of the Senior Management Team that the 2014 Summer exams were to be timetabled for the 1st, 2nd and 5th year students from Friday, 16th May to Friday 23rd May as agreed at the Staff meeting of 15th January. Based on the feedback from the staff the Senior Management Team asked that consideration be given to the rescheduling of the summer exams. After much discussion it was agreed to propose to the staff that the exams would run from Tues 20th May to Tues 27th May. It was agreed that the Deputy principal would speak to the staff at 10.50 the next day and a notice be placed in the staffroom to see if staff agreed with this proposal (April, 2014).

At the same Staff Meeting the arrangements for the Summer Examinations were outlined. Transition year students were to have class - based exams. It was requested that a copy of the agreed common exam paper for each subject in each year be submitted to the principal no later than Wednesday 7th May. The examination timetable would be posted in the staffroom by the 9th of May and the subjects would be timetabled in the reverse order to the Christmas Exams. This timetable would be put on the website for students to access and texts would be sent to parents informing them of the dates the summer exams are starting. It would also request to parents that all students were to attend that week and reschedule appointments if necessary. An email would be circulated to all staff regarding the deadlines for the summer exams. I contend that having such a formal outline of the summer examinations in Coláiste Fionn send a clear message to both staff, students and their parents of the importance of these summer assessments. This narrative is told by meeting, email, text, website, notice boards, staffroom discussion as well as the less formal narrative discussions over coffee in the escape caverns of the grapevine. The narrative around the summer examinations is a fertile site for

teacher identity to be formed and reformed. This portrays how identities can be creatively produced through the various raw materials available, understandings, experiences and interpretations (Lawler, 2008, p.11).

Challenged by practice:

Alice is finding it challenging to author herself and also to become authored as a competent teacher. This is only her first year as a fully- fledged teacher. She tries to make meaning out of this narrative surrounding testing. A Geography Departmental meeting takes place at lunchtime, Alice got an email to confirm that it would be taking place to discuss the summer exams. She has got on well with her department colleagues during the year. She recalls,

I don't think we had too many meetings but everyone was certainly willing to help me if I had any questions or query's so it was positive (May, 2014).
This meeting is convened to decide what will be examined in the summer exam paper and to decide what teacher will prepare what papers. The Head of the Department for the year, John quickly sets out what is to be discussed. The non - exam classes are to have a one and a half our year end exam paper. He begins with the first years, he has the subject folder with him and takes out the subject plan for the year. He receives input for the teachers present as regards the topics to be examined. There is a negotiation of meaning between these teachers. Even though they have met before and prepared examinations this is a new negotiation. Each time the negotiation requires attention and adjustment, ongoing give and take between the participants. Wenger tells us that this negotiation of meaning is part of every- day activities, like this exam preparation. The teachers negotiate anew and give life to the histories of meaning of which this activity of examination preparation is part. They decide that they will all inform their students of the key topics to be examined. Alice volunteers to prepare this paper. She will circulate a draft to her colleagues by Friday and subject to their approval will photocopy enough for the entire first year geography students. She notes the deadline for their submission to the main office. She is pleased with the help she receives as one

colleague tells her that there is a bank of past pre-Junior Certificate Geography papers and solutions on teacher data. There will be very useful to her as she selects material for inclusion in the papers. The students would not have seen this material and it would add to the anonymity of the examination paper. John proceeds with the remaining non-exam year groups -second and fifth years. The bells resound signalling the end of lunch time and the return to afternoon classes. Alice through her participation in this practice of in-house examinations preparation is adopted and adopts the dominant practice of Coláiste Fionn. This helps Alice to pass as a teacher in this new place. The narratives that are exchanged between teachers in this short departmental lunchtime meeting is an incubation site for the growth of Alice's identity as a new newcomer teacher in this site as well as an opportunity for meaning to be negotiated between participants. By participating in this world Alice does not invent meaning independently, she acts and interprets in order to make decisions. However various artefacts support her decision, the specified curriculum, syllabus, subject file and the bank of past pre-examination papers. She negotiates her place in this community through her participation in the Summer Examination papers.

Negotiated experience: participation and reification:

Alice in her first year in Coláiste Fionn has successfully completed the task of preparing the first - year common exam paper and submitted the appropriate number for all first year Geography students. This is a very important milestone for Alice, and of her local identity. This is a reification of competence but more so a marker of Alice's process of belonging to a community and contributing to its practice. The daily engagement between teachers through narrative at both a department and whole staff level creates relations among them that constitute "who one is" in the staff, who knows what, who is good at what, who is cool, who is funny, who is friendly, who is central, who is peripheral. This very engagement in practice

gives us certain experiences of participation and what communities pay attention to reifies us as participants. Becoming a teacher and being a new newcomer teacher to Colaiste Fionn, is both taking on a label, and giving this label specific meanings through engagement in practice. It is doing what teachers do, being treated the way they are treated, forming the community they form, that gives personal meaning to Alice's day-to-day chores. The experience of Alice's identity is a way of being in this world (Wenger, 1998, p.151). Wenger sees Alice's identity as a layering of the events of participation and reification by which her experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As she encounters her effects on the world and develops relations with the teachers around her, these layers build upon each other to produce her identity as a complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections (Wenger, 1998, p.151). These two are brought together through the negotiation of meaning, Alice constructs who she is. Despite the challenges of opting for a teacher at the expense of a learner identity, she authors herself and becomes authored as a competent teacher. Identity therefore exists in her constant work of negotiating the self. Alice, the newcomer with the help of experienced colleagues like John in the Geography Department, and experts in the community is able to gain confidence and recognised expertise by participating.

The tests left me brain dead:

1st year was long, it seemed to go on forever. We had a lot of tests, chapter test, Christmas test, and Summer test (Bob, May 2014).

This teacher narrative around the Examinations runs parallel to the student narrative on the same issue. The first year's weekly diary entries are littered with references to the dreaded tests that have taken place or are to take place. Bob reflects on the torture of his week in Coláiste Fionn.

Hi, its Bob again, so far this week I've had three tests, two hurling trainings and an injection. The tests left me brain dead, the hurling left me tired, and the injection left me with a dead arm (Bob, March, 2014).

This ongoing narrative that takes place between pupil and pupil and teacher and pupil is a way that meaning is negotiated in this new place. It secures a sense of belonging or not. The tests are reifications as the students participate in the practice of these subjects often new to them from primary school. This world is populated by tests and it's not just the occasionally Maths and English tests or those very important STEN tests that used to take place in primary school.

Doing school- a process of negotiation in classrooms:

Tests are used to categorise and describe ability and disability, so we get the gifted, the talented, the genius, the slow learner, the disabled learner, and so on. Those so assigned are then recognised, act and come to think of themselves in those categories and also become living portrayals of what those words mean (Hall et al, 2014:90)

In Leah and Bobs classroom, they quickly become aware that learning is a process of knowledge transfer. The objective is to attain learning outcomes and to inform teacher planning. There are frequent tests, usually at the end of a topic and of course mid-term, Christmas, Easter and Summer assessments. These are graded with the usual percentage, A, B, C. They may be accompanied with a comment, like good work or must try harder. The Christmas and Summer report summarises success or failure in the subject areas. The Parent/Teacher Meeting clarifies how they are both progressing in the subject in the first few months of their move to secondary school. Bob's diary entry regarding the Christmas tests shows that he is feeling more at ease about the testing process and how to do school.

We got our results back and I didn't do so well. I have a few bad comments. My mom told me about the parent/teacher meeting (Bob, January, 2014).

Hence, I feel that the narrative that surrounds testing is a key means through which the newcomer student gains a sense of belonging as well as shaping their student identity. The

narrative that takes place between subject teachers and parents at the parent/teacher meeting is evidence of how the student is settling into their new environment.

Leah's academic journey through first year is one that demonstrates her competence in the testing ritual of Coláiste Fionn. She is also happy with her Christmas test results,

This week was our first week back after the Christmas holidays. I got my test results this week. So far, I have 4A's, 4Bs and IC. I just need to get my science test back (Leah, January, 2014).

The Friday entry in Bob's diary signals his anxiousness concerning tests.

Finally, its Friday! Usually a day of tests, but today we just had 1 and the good thing is that it's in the morning so it's over and done with. I hate having tests in the evening as its just annoying have to worry about it throughout the day (Bob, February, 2014).

Leah and Bob soon become labelled (McDermott, 2001), as being able or unable, competent or not in a given subject. They position themselves and are positioned by others as able. Holland et al. feel that people are not engaged in self-making, but are limited to varying degrees of accepting, rejecting, or negotiating the identities being offered to them. Their identities are shaped by this institutional view of their ability. There is of course a social, historical and cultural aspect to this classroom exchange. Within the figured world of the traditional classroom a student like Bob who consistently fails to memorise material, may come to figure himself as a dumb student. Through this figuring, individuals like Bob come to understand their future participation, in and across figured worlds. Not everyone can be smart in the classroom, as the teacher and some students like Leah are considered smarter than others (Robinson, 2007, p.194). the teacher has vast power, and smart and well - behaved students are ranked over dumb and disruptive students. Rather than having the agency to figure or refigure one's self, the individual is "figured" or "positioned" within that world.

Coláiste Fionn is a newly amalgamated school, but teachers bring their social, historical and cultural baggage to this place. The agent, activity and world are mutually constitutive (Rogoff, 1995). The teacher as agent embodies a past which is in the present. They have been filtered through the veils of their lived experience. This may mean they have moved from one of the pre - amalgamated schools, or from some other educational institution but the world still remains in them. The curriculum as specified remains static, but the enacted curriculum varies from classroom to classroom as teachers implement it. The socio-cultural view believes that ability is not just in the Leah and Bob's head but is inseparable for their environment. Leah and Bob are in the environment, and the environment is in them. This environment includes the cultural scripts about how to demonstrate success, how to be a Business Studies or a Maths learner in this place, what knowledge and skills are valued, as well as the kind of self to portray that demonstrates competence. Leah, is very pleased when she learns that she has been selected as the student of the class for the forthcoming awards ceremony.

I got 100% in the Maths test! And I got 88% in the Irish test which was very unexpected. I had a Science test on Wednesday which was kinda hard and I am waiting on the result. I won student of the class in my class! All the summer tests are starting next week so I'm trying to study for that (Leah, May, 2014).

Molly and Bobs, success or failure is constructed in Coláiste Fionn. Leah's ability and Bob's learning challenges are positions to be occupied, taken up and made real by the interactions and behaviours of those around them. The portrayal of Bob's lack of intelligence and success is an opportunity for Leah to claim intelligence and success. Bob is labelled by the school system based on his performance in tests. He became obvious as an unsuccessful member of the class by his poor performance in written tests. Both Leah and Bob are first year students and how they perform academically can determine if they will be allowed sit honours subjects for their Junior Certificate as they advance to second year. Leah and Bob, as actors can only use the cultural tools of this environment to negotiate their way in this social world.

8.9 Conclusion

Identity is negotiated in communities of practice through mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire.

Table 8B: Key findings

SECTION 1 STAFF	<p>Social mutual engagement makes and unmakes staff in communities of practice</p> <p>Staff engagement in joint enterprise impacts on identity building in communities of practice</p> <p>One staff member, Rachel gains a positional identity among the staff of Coáiste Fionn through her active engagement in the community of practice.</p>
SECTION 2 Newcomers STAFF	<p>Newcomers grow their identities through mutual engagement with old-timers</p> <p>Newcomer identities are transformed through their participation in mutually constitutive practices</p> <p>Newcomer identities flourish in the caring and supportive staff networks of social relations in communities of practice</p>
SECTION 3 New COPs PUPILS OTHER ADULTS	<p>First years create their own shared history of engagement through meaning making opportunities in communities of practice</p> <p>The layers of mud and layers of meaning thicken first year identities</p> <p>Participants transform their identities in communities of practice.</p> <p>Participants are “figured”, and “positioned” within the world of communities of practice.</p>

This chapter set out to examine the operation of communities of practice in the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn and their role in identity negotiation. The first section of the findings concentrated on the engagement of the staff through the lens of a *Day in A Life*. There was strong evidence of Wenger's (1998) framework of mutual Engagement, joint Enterprise and shared repertoire in action during the day. The community of practice was found to be a rich source for identity making. Staff social and academic mutual engagement helps them to become different people. Rachel's authoritative voice on school developmental planning gains her a positional identity in her community of practice. The findings of this first Section of the Chapter consolidate those of Chapter 6 in echoing the fact that identity thickens through participation in practice.

The second section of the chapter finds evidence to support Lave & Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation (1991). Joan the old-timer takes Alice the newcomer teacher *under her wing*. Alice through her relationship with Joan is helped to become absorbed into the practice of an early year's teacher and also the many communities of practice in Coláiste Fionn. The caring supportive environment of Coláiste Fionn is evidenced as all new newcomers flourish through rich social relations, confirming the findings of the care and Christian ethos of Chapter 7.

In the final section of this Chapter, my evidence supports the findings of the Whole School Evaluation as it is clear that the newly formed Parents Association quickly gathers momentum as a "very active and engaging" (WSE, November, 2016) community of practice. This community of practice is knit together from the membership of parents who wish to support the school community of Coláiste Fionn. The newcomer First Years also form their own community of practice and they soon become "Grown Up" in the supportive and nurturing culture of the school. Both newly formed communities of practice highlight that identity is performed and emergent in the shared practices of a community. I also explore the

challenges for newcomer teachers and first year students to “figure” themselves in the figured world of testing that is all part of the practice of doing school in Coláiste Fionn.

The evidence of this final findings chapter supports Wenger’s (1998) framework. It affirms that mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire are key elements of all the communities of practice examined. The findings consolidate those of Chapter 6 when we see identity crafted in the moment-to-moment, and also those of Chapter 7 when we found identity to be established and maintained through narrative. Identity making is indeed situated in group activity and distributed across group participation. The identities of its people have become firmly anchored in each other and what they do together (Wenger, 1998, p.89).

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Implications

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter draws my thesis to a conclusion. It summarises the main findings from the literature and the empirical evidence as well as integrating the two sets of literature while answering the three guiding themes of this research study:

Identity:

- 4. How sport is used as a tool to negotiate identities in new spaces.**

Narrative Identity:

- 5. How identities are made through narrative.**

Communities of Practice:

- 6. How identity is negotiated in communities of practice.**

This chapter also draws on the implications my research findings for the various audiences: practitioners, educational policy makers, researchers and contribution to sociocultural theory. It recognises the limitations of the study and it offers some reflections on my research journey.

9.2 Critical discussion and key ideas of this study

Coláiste Fionn Designated Community College was established through the amalgamation of two former second level schools in the town of Bayview. It caters for over 697 post primary students and has a staff of approximately 60. On Tuesday 11th October 2011 the doors of the new state of the art college opened its doors for the first time to welcome students. The college was officially opened on March 30th 2012 by Seán Sherlock, then Minister for Research and Innovation.

This research study stemmed from the amalgamation of secondary schools in Bayview, which brought tidal waves of change to both teacher and pupil landscapes. Both parties experienced mammoth changes in practices and identity. Their lived school experiences were transformed and this study captures the voiced experience of their unfolding identities in the new space.

The Commission on School Amalgamation Report- Amalgamation of Second Level Schools September 2001 recognise that amalgamation of schools has major implications for the school communities involved. The desired result is a school that serves its students well and that receives full support of staff, parents and the wider community. Furthermore, the report signals:

In the new school attention should be given to the development of good relationships, the integration of students and staffs and the development of a new school identity (CSA, 2001, p.34).

The objective of amalgamation is to provide an enhanced educational environment for students who can benefit from the outcome (CSA, 2001). I believe that my research illustrates the successful establishment of a new school identity in Coláiste Fionn.

9.2.1 It's all about the “non - local” view of the mind

This research study is firmly rooted in the sociocultural “nonlocal” view of the mind. This view is interwoven throughout the work. It is established in chapters 2,3 and 4 through the literature and evidenced in the findings of chapters 6,7 and 8.

I present strong evidence of mind being formed through practice. Identity formation occurs as a process of participation in the cultural activities that both pupils and teachers engage in. Meaning is created in situ through participation in socially situated activities. Identity

transformation occurs when individual teachers and pupils move from the periphery and from being a novice to the centre in a community of practice. Teachers and pupils transform themselves and their activities through participation. The key message is that you become transformed and transform identities through mutual social engagement in communities of practice.

9.3 Research design- “a lens into capturing the moment-to moment”

I believe in the constructivist view that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research site. Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify that qualitative research methods are preferred when working in this paradigm. This method aligned well with my central argument that identity is performed in the moment-to-moment. I choose the case study method as the key method of research design. I feel that an important strength of this method is its ability to examine, in-depth, first hand understanding of the unfolding identities of teacher and pupil in the newly amalgamated secondary school.

The qualitative case study facilitated exploration of the phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. I was able to employ ethnographic observation, focus groups and semi-structured interviews, as a central means of data collection, ensured I was able to capture the everyday unfolding of identity in the research site. There was a narrative approach to the building of this case study as the tales of life were captured to build the story of the unfolding identities. I analysed the data using thematic analysis. The details of the research are outlined in chapter 5 of this study.

My use of ethnographic observation to study the lived experiences, daily activities, and social context of everyday life from the perspectives of the teachers and pupils in Coláiste Fionn contributed to netting data from everyday life situations. My sustained engagement in the site as a dual teacher and researcher, spanning a time frame from April 2013 -May 2014, helped me to gain both an understanding of the life - world of the school and an insider depiction of the studied world. I relied on Mertens (2010, p.231), recommendations as regards carrying out this ethnographic work. I also drew upon the advice of Charmaz (2006) with regard to observations in field notes gathered in a grounded theory project. I observed classroom life, corridor and staffroom activity. I engaged in social events throughout the research time period and these observations were noted in a daily researcher diary. These observations were used to confirm the validity and reliability of my data findings. The observations also helped me to confirm the lived practices of the school as I advanced my argument that it is participation with other people in valued practices that drives identity development.

Capturing tales:

Narrative knowledge was created and constructed through the stories of lived experience that were narrated in the following research methodologies. I employed the use of the semi-structured interview (Mertens, 2010, p.187) and focus groups to elicit data from both teachers and pupils. I choose the qualitative interview, as Kvale (2008) tells us that it is the production site of knowledge. I held 7 interviews with teachers ranging from new newcomers to Coláiste Fionn to teachers who were long serving members of the two staffs that were amalgamated in Bayview. I also interviewed pupils from First year to Leaving Certificate level. I linked with visual methodologies, as the students in the different year groups were given a disposable camera to take photos of their week. The pictures were developed and they were used as a means of data collection. The semi-structured interview focused on the

significant aspects of their week and what life was like for them in Coláiste Fionn. I conducted two main focus groups made up of teachers. One focus group consisted of teachers from the Thursday Club, the second focus group comprised of a cohort of teachers from various subject departments and teaching career trajectories. I held a focus group with my Second Year Business Studies class and I got a good insight into what life was like for them in the school. All focus groups provided me with evidence of the unfolding identities of both teacher and pupil in their newfound space. These interviews and focus groups foregrounded the practices as regards what teachers and pupils do in Coláiste Fionn. I was able to hear the “voiced experiences” of how people were participating differently in school life and what they were able to do because of the networks, structures and resources that were available to them.

I used school communications media, like the revamped school website, as a data source for internal staff communication. The school website provided me with an up to-date window into the lived experience of the research site. The school’s webmaster updates the website regularly with communication received from teachers. The report of WSE 2016 endorses my use of the website as a rich source of information on school life.

The very good quality school website acts as a clear window on the operation of the school, the range of activities undertaken, and the celebration of the achievements of the students. (WSE Report, 2016)

The above quotation from the Whole School Evaluation Report of 2016 highlights how effective a communication tool it is. I also found the staff internal email invaluable. It logged the daily interactions between staff. The school’s internal email system is the main method of communication used between staff in the school. Hence, I was able to use both of the above as effective data gathering tools. These communication methods advance my argument that mind is shared and distributed among community members in Coláiste Fionn.

I found the use of visual methodologies a rich source of data collection. I used student drawings, particularly with the first years as a means of illustrating reality. I got first-year students to draw their experiences of life in the school after 8 weeks and again on conclusion of the school year. These were used to demonstrate their infolding identities. I worked with the school art department and visited a first- year art class as they were working on an animal collage. I observed them work on their project with the aid of their teacher. I then entered a discussion with them on how they were getting on in the school. I recorded this discussion and I also got each student to record how and why they prepared this particular piece of artwork. The artwork was an unobtrusive means of entering their world. The artwork produced by students was analysed as evidence of their performing identities. This methodology was employed particular in Chapter 7 of the study as the visual narrative was traced as a means of negotiating identity. The significant school photographs and pictorial artefacts were examined for their meaning making. These photographs and artworks adorning the school walls provided strong evidence of the social, historic, political and cultural unfolding of identity. All of the above artistic mediums were helpful to me in my quest to produce and represent evidence of identity development.

The research design employed tracked the practices that led to the unfolding identities of pupil and teacher. Transforming identities was enabled on a day-to-day basis through the social practices which are given meaning and structure through their social and historical context. The practices were seen to evolve and exhibit aspects of resilience and malleability in the new school. Identities become salient in different situations. As teachers and pupils engaged, performed and practiced, they assumed identities and my research design enabled me to capture how particular identities became salient in particular moments. Identity traces

our participation in activities and the qualitative ethnographic lens I used in my research illuminated the situations that called forth those identities.

9.4 Guiding themes

This section will deal with each guiding theme individually, and then offer a holistic and interrogative stance based on the findings from the literature and the data analysis.

Identity:

1. How sport is used as a tool to negotiate identities in new spaces.

In chapter 2, I established a definition of identity which was further developed in chapters 3 and 4 of the literature review. This first guiding theme explored and provided strong threads of evidence supporting this definition. The Findings chapter was divided into three main sections, the first section concentrated on how a new newcomer first year, Katie, negotiated her identity through sport. I found evidence that Katie crafted her identity in bespoke moment-to-moment encounters. She transformed from being scared on her first day and behaving like a lost sheep to becoming an active and engaging participant in school life. This happened through her continued involvement in sport. She had a very active interest in sport from her primary school days and now in her new setting she continues to involve herself in sport. Sport is a key activity that helps in her transition from primary to secondary school. Katie is an active participant who seeks meaning and identity in her new social world. I found evidence of the fluidity of her identity as Katie participated in many different sports. She participated in Athletics, Gaelic Football and Tag Rugby. Her identity changed depending on the activities she chose to do, where she was and who she was with. Katie was agentive in her actions. Her identity was performed in the sports that she participated in alongside the team members and coaches that supported her. This evidence supports Lave's

theory of agent, activity and world being enmeshed: who we are played out in the context of who we are allowed to be influenced in every context the shared resources Katie could appropriate to participate in the different sports she engaged in.

I found evidence of Katie's identity thickening when she involved herself in meaningful activities. Wenger (1998) contends that learning is a process of identity formation. When something is interesting and meaningful and is part of our identity, we are more likely to learn from it. Her sporting identity became layered by all the meaningful sporting activities she participated in. This is evidenced by her greater sense of belonging in the school community from embarking on the first cross country event to her participation in the school's track and field events at the conclusion of the academic year.

Figured worlds gather participants up. I discovered that the figured world of sport (Holland and Lave, 2001; Holland et al, 1998), soon consumed Katie. Sport was the salient identity that she chose to grow by. Katie the first- year new newcomer student to Coláiste Fionn invests in the figured world of sport and she marks herself out as belonging to this figured world. Katie is scaffolded by Gráinne (Vygotsky, 1978) who scaffolds Katie's learning and participation in sport and hence Katie's identity transformation. Rogoff's (1995) socio-cultural approach to development is evidenced in the newcomer - old-timer relationship between Senior athlete Gráinne and newcomer Katie. This chapter provides evidence of Gráinne's and Katie's identity transformation through their mutual participation.

In the second section of this chapter I unveil findings regarding how a newcomer teacher Alice negotiates her identity through her involvement in sport in Coláiste Fionn. She is desperate to belong in this newly found space and realises that helping out in extra-curricular

activities like school sport is a means to do this. The figured world of sport is a meaning system that mediates her behaviour. Alice, through her involvement in school badminton and organising a golf scramble, absorbs and is absorbed by the sports culture of Coláiste Fionn. This supports the theoretical findings of Lave and Wenger (1991) who describe how learning involves absorbing and being absorbed by the culture of the practice.

Finally, I found evidence of the figured world of sport in action on the second- year corridor. It is a fertile ground for identity formation as pupils play pitch and toss with bottle tops and coins. The bowling culture of West Cork is lived along the corridor. The second year boys, through their engagement in practice with others, live culturally and negotiate their new identities in this culture. This supports the views of Holland et al (1998:53) as a figured world of sport is formed and reformed in relation to the everyday activities and events that ordain happenings within it. I also found evidence of the negative impact of certain practices in PE, like when students did the beep test and also when classes were divided for PE on the basis of gender. Hence it is clear that through involvement in the everyday social practices of sport participants form, transform and etch out liveable identities.

So, what does all this mean for the unfolding development of identity? The sociocultural understanding of mind and self sees Katie and Alice within a community. Their identities are relational, shared, emergent, mediated and distributed by the world of Coláiste Fionn and those they share it with. Through the social process of participation and reification they both engage in meaningful experiences that help them grow their identities and become the kind of people that they can become. Evidently, mind and cognition are distributed across and mediated by the communities of practice explored in chapter 8 and the social networks

explored in chapter 7. Identity building is emergent as identities are performed in the moment -to - moment.

Guiding theme 2: How identities are negotiated through narrative

In this chapter I also explored this second guiding theme pertaining to how identities are negotiated through narrative. I used Rogers and Scott (2008: 733) basic assumptions common to contemporary conceptions of identity as a framework for this chapter. These assumptions were firmly established in chapter 3 of the literature review. I found that identity is indeed formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation.

Clearly from a sociocultural perspective the cultural mediation of identity building occurs through the use of cultural tools and artefacts. The social mediation occurs through the interactions of participants with others as they go about their day - to - day activities.

I firstly explored the visual identity in Coláiste Fionn. I explored how significant artefacts shaped identities in Coláiste Fionn. I found three reifications that were tools for thinking with and negotiating this new world. The strong evidence of the Christian ethos and pastoral care system symbolised in the first two artefacts is confirmed and locally appropriated into practices as evidenced by Cáit's struggles to continue the pastoral care system of the old world into the new. This high level of student support and care was commented upon by the WSE Chief Inspector's Report 2016. This endorses the findings of this study. The student support, care and guidance structures are seamlessly integrated and are of an excellent quality.

The exemplary level of support for student learning and wellbeing are a further key element of leadership, and show commitment of all involved in the operation of these supports (WSE, 2016).

The second artefact endorsed the diversity and richness of social, cultural, political and historic engagement in meaning making and forging identities between divergent cultural worlds. I continued my focus on the school's evolving visual identity through looking at a sample of subject work displayed near the main entrance and discovered that the work of subject departments contributed significantly to meaning making and identity negotiation in this new school world. This work supports Dorothy Holland's (2001) conceptualisation of identity building as improvised in this everyday flow of activity in art and geography class. Pupils are indeed caught between their past histories and drawn toward the new discourses and images that attract them. Despite challenges as a result of her disability, one pupil Cassy is challenged to participate in the art class. But with the help of her special needs assistant and art teacher, she is provided with the opportunity to participate in the discourse.

I examined the unfolding of identity in social spaces and brought to the fore Roger's and Scott's assumption that identity is formed in relationship with others. The interactions of the staff, both externally in Thursday Club and internally in the Staffroom, clearly set forth how identity is made for teachers in Coláiste Fionn through their relationships and the stories that ebb and flow between them. It is clear that the social spaces are rich repositories for identity development as learners become active participants seeking meaning and learning in this social world. The honeycomb of social relationships helps identities to be constructed, represented and performed as evidenced here

Finally, I focused on how identity making involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories overtime. The findings clearly point to the fact that it is through the sharing of stories that identity becomes both established and maintained. This is also a social process and supports the view that identity formation takes place through the people around us and is occasioned in everyday social spaces. Identity was steadfastly built on individuals

telling stories about their lives, both to themselves and to others, and it was through such stories that they made sense of their new world in Coláiste Fionn and of their relationship to that world (Lawler, 2008, p.12).

Guiding theme 3: How identities are negotiated in communities of practice.

Chapter 8 is divided into three key Sections. Section 1 provides evidence of how social and academic mutual engagement builds staff identities. I explored how one staff member gained a positional identity through her active engagement in her community of practice. The chapter addressed how participants' identities grew in Communities of Practice as they engaged in practice through Wenger's framework (1998) of Mutual Engagement, Joint Enterprise and Shared Repertoire.

In Section 2, I concentrated on how newcomers to a community of practice learned to become full members through a process of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Once the newcomer gained membership status they participated in group activity through apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995). It provides strong evidence of how membership of communities of practice indeed translates into an identity as a form of competence.

In the final Section of Chapter 8, I explored how new communities of practice formed during the research year like the school's inaugural Parents Association and the cohort of newcomer first years, impacted on participants unfolding identities. There is strong evidence supporting the findings of The Whole School Evaluation (November, 2016) and it is clear that the newly formed Parents Association quickly gathers momentum as a "very active and engaging" community of practice (WSE, November, 2016). This community of practice is knit together from the membership of parents who wish to support the school community of Coláiste Fionn. The newcomer First Years also form their own Community of Practice and they soon

become “Grown Up” in the supportive and nurturing culture of the school. Both newly formed communities of practice bring to the fore the fact that identity is performed and emergent in the shared practices of a community. Both teacher and pupil exemplifiers are given to illustrate their difficulties in participating in the academic world of testing that is part of secondary school life. Alice authors herself as competent, whilst Bob is positioned as “unable”.

Hence communities of practice act as a hub of identity formation and transformation in Coláiste Fionn. This final findings chapter helps to convey that the mind and identity development is mediated as identity development is distributed between students and staff within a group as opposed to in individual heads and minds.

The findings of this research give prominence to the strong influence of social participation on identity development. As social actors both teacher and pupil act and shape and are shaped by the world. This allows them to socially reproduce and transform the world of Coláiste Fionn in ways that are meaningful to them and also help them to make sense of their experience in this new place. Identity building and living become like Siamese twins in the sense that they are inseparable from one another. As one lives in Coláiste Fionn one’s identity grows. The sociocultural development of identity unfolds before our eyes through the identity building opportunities afforded to the participants of Coláiste Fionn. The resources both human and material, the peer relationships and the bespoke moment - by - moment interactions make people into the people they are and become. Identity building is all about moving from being a novice to the centre in a community of practice. Katie, Alice and Rachel transform themselves and their activities through participating and taking part. I would like to conclude this section of the chapter by looking at Rogoff’s work (1995) as I feel it illuminates the participatory aspects of identity development and the inter-relationship between the personal and the social that is a central aspect of my research.

9.4.1 Rogoff's development theory unfolds – wrapping up the key ideas

Rogoff offered a challenge to the dominant way of thinking when she unveiled that development can only occur through participation with other people. Her theory of development allows me to bring together the key ideas of this thesis. This study illustrates that participation through every day lived experience is the engine for identity development of research participants like Katie and Alice. Engagement in sport, identity development through narrative and the social engagements of communities of practice illuminate Rogoff's sociocultural approach. She considered the personal, interpersonal and community planes to analyse the development process involved in the participation of individuals with others in social and cultural practices. Identity development and participation occur simultaneously on all three planes as they are “mutually constituting” (Rogoff, 1995, p.141). This is evidenced in my own research when Katie is an active individual participating with others in the culturally organised activities of the athletics squad. The concept of guided participation is demonstrated between Katie and Gráinne as they communicate and coordinate efforts in the athletics training session. Both Katie and Gráinne change through their involvement in athletics. This participation changes their ability to handle later situations and is a process of becoming through what Rogoff terms participatory appropriation. The findings of this study present a view of identity development as a dynamic, active and mutual process involved in people's participation in cultural activities.

9.5 Limitations of the study

Firstly, I have to acknowledge the limitation of concentrating mainly on students that I taught for the student interviews and focus groups. The teacher-pupil relationship may have

impacted on their responses to the questions posed. It would be better to broaden the range of students but it was convenient as these students were more accessible to me.

I must also acknowledge my dual role as a teacher/researcher in the site. This may have challenged my ability to make the familiar strange. I remained conscious of this dual role throughout the research process and I tried to separate the two roles. I am confident that I overcame these challenges through my use of a variety of evidence from differing sources which served to add rigour to my research. There are plenty of lessons to be learned from the findings of this research and I also acknowledge that every study has its limitations.

9.6 Critical Perspectives on Amalgamation

Amalgamations are not a panacea, and this is as true for Secondary School amalgamations as any other. The amalgamation brings mammoth change to the lives of those affected, before, during and after the process. I will now discuss some of the critical perspectives that this involves.

The effective implementation of change management strategies is necessary at all stages. The Commission on School Amalgamation recognise the central role that Human Resources play in a successful amalgamation, and the necessity to support them throughout.

As staff members are central people in the amalgamation process, adequate attention should be given to their support and preparation during the process (CSA, 2001, p.24).

Undoubtably, the human impact of amalgamation must be considered. Issues such as anxiety and apprehension pre amalgamation and sadness and nostalgia post amalgamation are human emotions that staff members, administrative personnel, management and all those affected by the process feel. Teachers who may have been heads of subject departments in their former

school may find their status has changed as “Chiefs become Indians”. Allied to the move to the new building comes the associated challenges of navigating a bigger space and physically navigating around it. It can be both tiring and frustrating trying to locate both staff and students. Communication challenges such as not hearing intercom messages can cause staff stress. This has a huge impact on staff members sense of wellbeing. These “soft issues” pertaining to human resources must be acknowledged and addressed if the amalgamation process is to be truly holistic and inclusive in its focus.

Resourcing and financial support is often provided at the outset and provides for adequate Information and Communication Technology facilities. The issues arise around the maintenance and upgrading of such facilities to enable the school to fulfil its teaching and learning obligations. This is especially true given the growth in school numbers and the roll out of the Junior Certificate Framework that requires students to carry out extensive research and secure ICT competence. Buildings are sometimes full of “bling”, but lack adequate canteen facilities and seating so students may find themselves sitting on the floor eating their lunch.

The Commission on School Amalgamations recommend:

Five years after a school is established as a result of amalgamation, the board of management should arrange an evaluation of the process and the outcomes to inform the process of school planning locally and nationally (CSA, 2001, p.54).

The change that amalgamation brings is both substantial and transformational and the lessons taught must be documented and reviewed. This is helpful at a micro level to guide school development planning, but also at a macro level to feed into national policy regarding school amalgamation.

The inordinate level of bureaucracy in school management can have negative consequences. The school management company – Sodexo (Coláiste Fionn), carries out the day-to day maintenance of school accommodation. Staff members must log requests for facilities like room changes, with the Helpdesk. The red tape and complex procedures associated with bureaucratic models of administration can cause considerable duplication of resources and heighten staff stress levels.

9.7 Implications for practitioners and policy makers

I now examine the implications of the findings of this empirical study on the negotiation of identities in a newly amalgamated secondary school.

This research paints a very positive picture of a post amalgamation secondary school setting. Pupils and teachers have bedded in well in their new environment. The Commission on School Amalgamation (2001), acknowledge that amalgamation of schools has major implications for the school communities involved. They found that amalgamation is most definitely about proactivity, harmonisation and improvement. It is not about decline. My research findings copper-fasten this aspiration. The Commission on School Amalgamation also recommended a framework for the amalgamation process (2001). I was pleased to be part of this process in the case of Coláiste Fionn. This was highly effective and noted in the Chief Inspector's Report on the WSE in Coláiste Fionn in 2016:

It is clear that the journey toward the establishment of the school community of Coláiste Fionn has engaged all stakeholders in creating a very high quality school and place of learning (WSE, 2016).

I would therefore urge other school communities embarking on a similar journey to adhere to the Commission on Amalgamation guidelines for school amalgamations.

I acknowledge that examining school leadership did not come under the remit of this study. It is evident from this research that there is very high- quality leadership in Coláiste Fionn. In all school amalgamations this is a necessary prerequisite for a successful outcome for the participants involved. Again, this aspect of school life was commented upon favourably in the Chief Inspector's WSE Report.

The principal and deputy principal provide very high- quality leadership for the school. Both have defined yet complementary roles and work together as a highly effective leadership team. The development of an excellent school for all students, as underpinned by the mission statement, is a key principle of this leadership. The expression of this leadership has involved the successful navigation of the amalgamation that has included the completion of the extensive school-building process, and the establishment of a very clear unity of purpose amongst all stakeholders in Coláiste Fionn (WSE, 2016).

I therefore recommend that high-quality leadership is a key ingredient for successful school amalgamations and for the development of active, purposeful and effective engagement of all stakeholders. This in turn cultivates an environment where teachers and pupils have a deep sense of belonging and nurtures their identity development and indeed the identity of the school community.

A very significant statement was made by the Chief Inspector of the WSE process, Dr. Donál Fleming when he addressed the staff of Coláiste Fionn in November 2016, after the inspection: "Had I not been aware that Coláiste Fionn was the product of an amalgamation, I would not have known". This clearly indicates how Coláiste Fionn acts as a model for successful school amalgamations. I therefore urge Central Government and Educational and Training Boards to continue to support the school amalgamation process.

Furthermore, while I acknowledge that this research resides in an educational setting, there are some lessons to be learnt that can be applied to organisational change involving

amalgamations and mergers in general. If an effective process is implemented under the guidance of highly effective leadership there are more favourable outcomes for the participants involved. I would also recommend that due attention be given to the human impact of amalgamation, the “soft issues”, at all stages of the process. I acknowledge that this is a developing and emergent area and call upon more research to be conducted regarding same. I also recommend that the 5 - year review takes place in the newly amalgamated school, in line with the recommendations of the Commission on School Amalgamation (2001). Finally, I recommend that the resourcing and financing be reviewed in line with current demands of the Junior Certificate Framework.

9.8 Contribution of this work to the field of Socio-Cultural Theory

This research was not designed to advance Socio-Cultural Theory but definitely drew on this theory in a novel way to expose and explicate matters of identity and community building in a secondary school setting. Socio-Cultural Theory underpinned the framework for this study and I feel that the findings unveil the truly social nature of the mind in its cultural settings.

The sociocultural understanding of self and mind places the individual within a community, defining consciousness as relational, shared, emergent, mediated and distributed by the world in which we live and those we share it with. In this study, teacher and pupil identities were acquired through the myriad of activities and social interactions which took place in the different communities of practice they participated in. It is through participation in communities of practice that identities flourished and people were made and unmade in the moment-to-moment exchanges.

This research has shown that the ordinary everyday ebbs and flows of life do make a difference to the kinds of people that individuals are allowed to become. The fashioning of identity is part of the social process of existing in a new place. I have shown this through glimpses of sporting life in Coláiste Fionn, the narrative journey of participants in school life and ultimately through the social interactions inherent in the numerous communities of practice that populate school life. Identity making is part of the nuts and bolts of living. This becoming of people through their engagement with the world around them is a valuable insight and my research justifiably, illuminates how this very engagement changes who people are. This research conveys that identity is not a personal individual acquisition but rather moulded through participation in socially situated activities. I have demonstrated that identity building is unreservedly distributed across group participation and participants' social negotiation with their lived world.

This study extends Rogoff's theory of development through the lived experience of participants in a newly amalgamated school. Identity development is not a possession. It can only occur through participation. The study exemplifies that mind is shared and distributed. The teachers and pupils are both in the school environment of Coláiste Fionn and of this new school environment. When I examined the small shifts in perspective like Katie's evolving journey as a newcomer first year. I was able to shed light on her identity development. I can therefore conclude that identity transformation takes place for agents through activities that they engage with in their new worlds. Agent, Activity and World are mutually constitutive (Rogoff, 1995).

9.9 Scope for future research

There is of course scope to develop this research through examination of other aspects of negotiating identities other than through the main means explored here, notably sport,

narrative and communities of practice. There is also scope to extend this study to other secondary schools that have undergone the amalgamation process. Additionally, there is scope to take a more longitudinal approach to studies like this and trace first year pupil journey and identity development throughout second level. This would allow for uncovering the history of participation along with repeated practices. The study could be extended to incorporate other types of organisational change ranging from mergers to takeovers and corporate acquisitions.

9.10 Conclusion

In this final chapter I have discussed the outcome of the research into the voiced experiences of teachers and pupils as regards their unfolding identities in a newly amalgamated secondary school setting. I have offered a summary of the overall research while answering the guiding themes posed in the Introduction. I considered the limitations of the study and I presented a series of recommendations to be considered by school practitioners and policy makers.

Finally, I outlined the contribution this study makes to Socio-Cultural Theory and the scope for further research.

I conclude with the key findings from the literature and my newly unveiled empirical study.

Key findings

The practices we find meaning in are the practices we invest our identities in.

Sport is a salient identity to grow by.

The figured world of sport gathers participants up.

Layers of meaningful sporting experiences form a construction of identity.

Identities are crafted in bespoke moment-to-moment experiences.

Visual identity evolves in a newly amalgamated school.

Identity is formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear on its formation.

Artefacts illuminate the Christian ethos and the pastoral care identity of Coláiste Fionn.

The situated nature of identity as collectively formed, socially produced in culturally constructed activity is established through the work of subject departments.

Identity is formed in relationship with others.

Thursday club social evenings provide a sacred space where newcomers mingle with old timers to offer support and extend their identities.

Teachers through collaborative activity demonstrate the fluidity of identity as they change depending on what they are doing, where they are and who they are with.

Identities are built through oral storytelling in conversation, interaction and joint participation in staffroom life.

Social spaces are rich repositories for identity development.

Identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time.

Through the sharing of stories identity becomes established and maintained. Stories shape our memories into something meaningful by fusing past, present and future in the creation of an identity.

Social mutual engagement makes and unmakes staff in communities of practice.

Staff engagement in joint enterprise impacts on identity.

One staff member, Rachel gains a positional identity among the staff of Coláiste Fionn through her active engagement in the community of practice.

Newcomers grow their identities through mutual engagement with old-timers.

Newcomer identities are transformed through their participation in mutually constitutive practices.

Newcomer identities flourish in the caring and supportive staff networks of social relations in communities of practice.

First years create their own shared history of engagement through meaning making opportunities in communities of practice.

The layers of mud and layers of meaning thicken first year identities.

Participants transform their identities in communities of practice.

All of the above illustrate the sociocultural understanding of identity development. Identity development is situated in group activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and distributed across group participation (Rogoff, 1995).

9.11 A Brief Reflection

When I embarked on my PhD journey in October 2011, I had just relocated to the newly amalgamated Coláiste Fionn. The move to the new school consumed me and also conversation around me. Despite this, I did not envisage I would be carrying out my research on the school. I loved studying the Module “Learning as Identity”. This opened doors in my mind when I did my Masters. I knew I would like to study the human side of the amalgamation. I quickly fixed my mind on studying some aspect of identity to do with the amalgamation.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Cohort PhD programme and the contributions of the programme lecturers, colleagues and summer schools to helping me build this study. I hope the small tales of identity building explored in this study reveal just what a positive school learning environment exists in Coláiste Fionn. I am very fortunate to be part of this great school.

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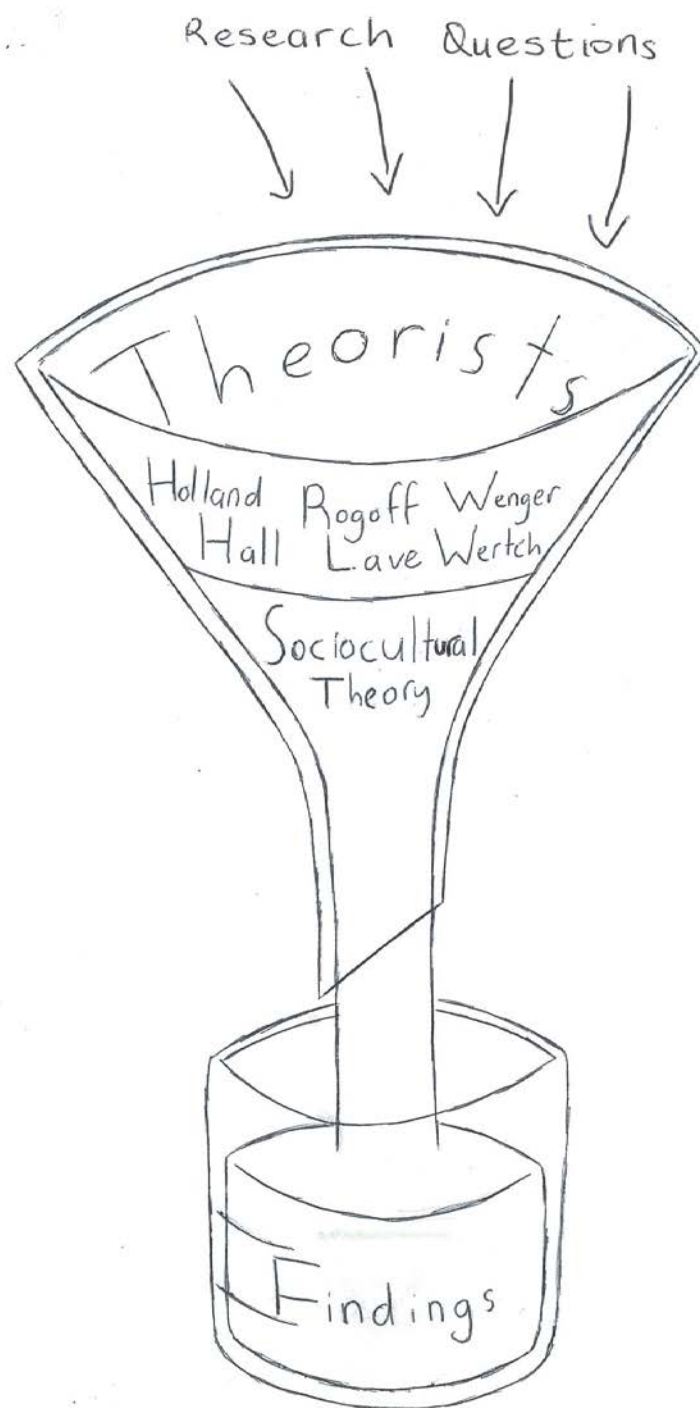
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Appendix 1



Conceptual Filtration Funnel
DOT

Appendix 2

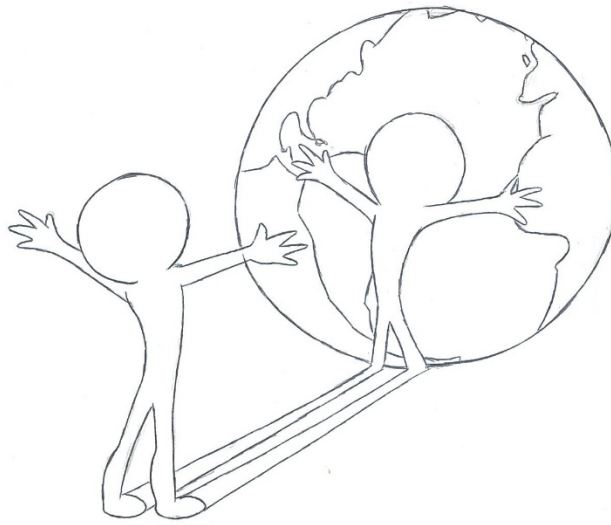
PARTICIPATION — WE RECOGNISE OURSELVES IN EACH OTHER



DAT

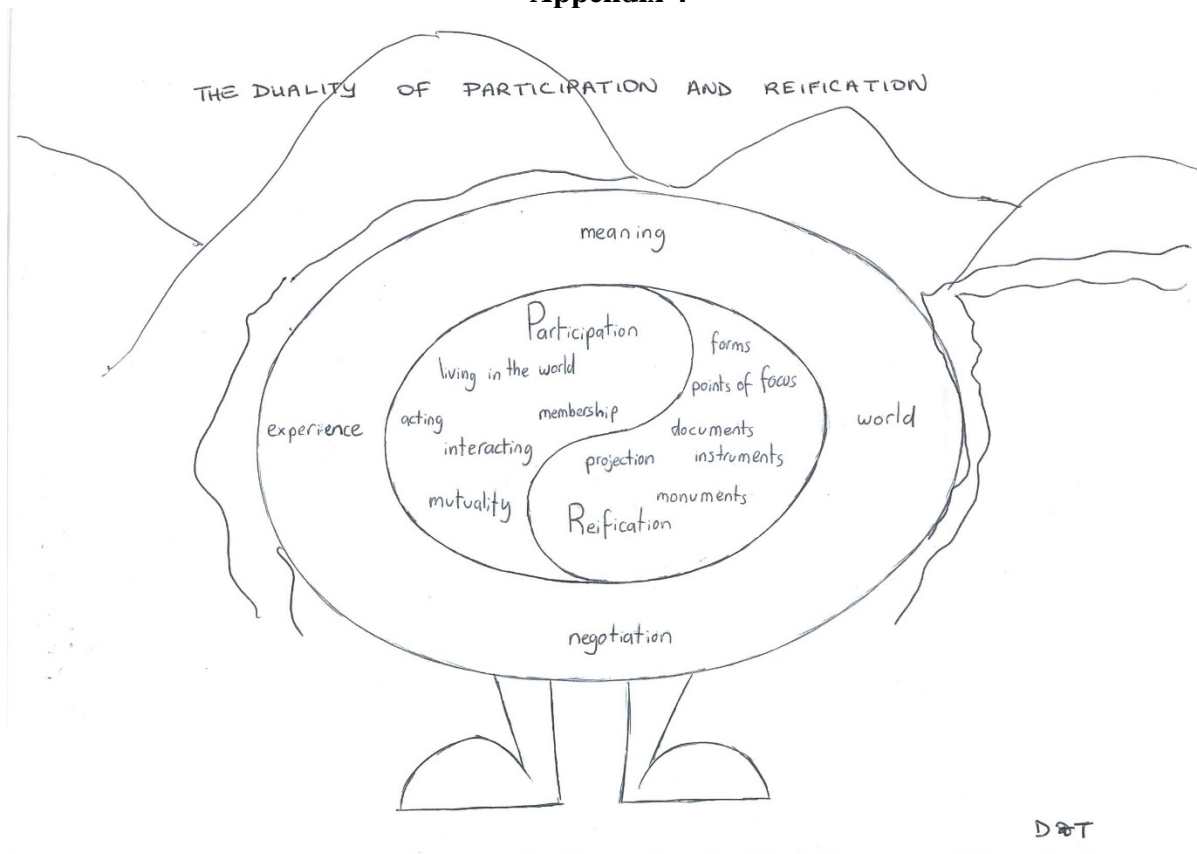
Appendix 3

REIFICATION — WE PROJECT OURSELVES ONTO THE WORLD



DET

Appendix 4



Appendix 5

ARTROOM



Rogoff - Personal , Interpersonal + Community Planes

Appendix 6

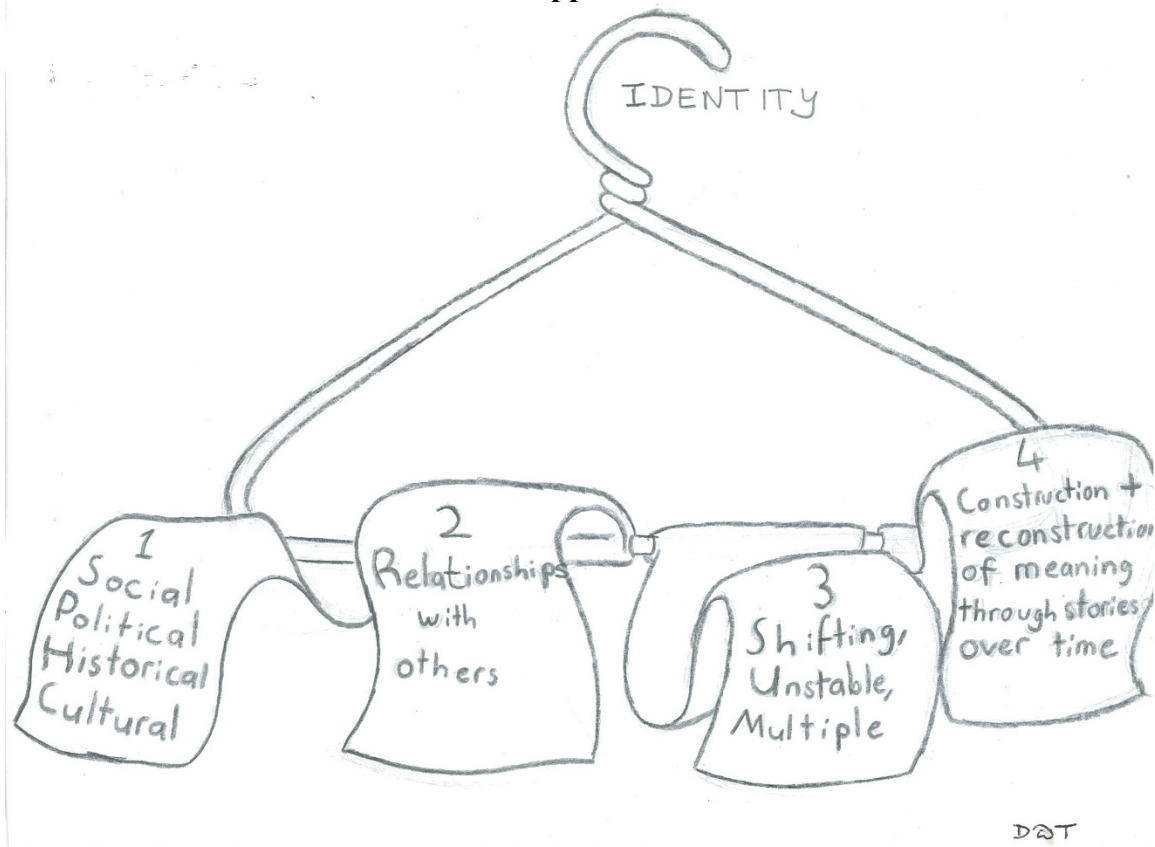
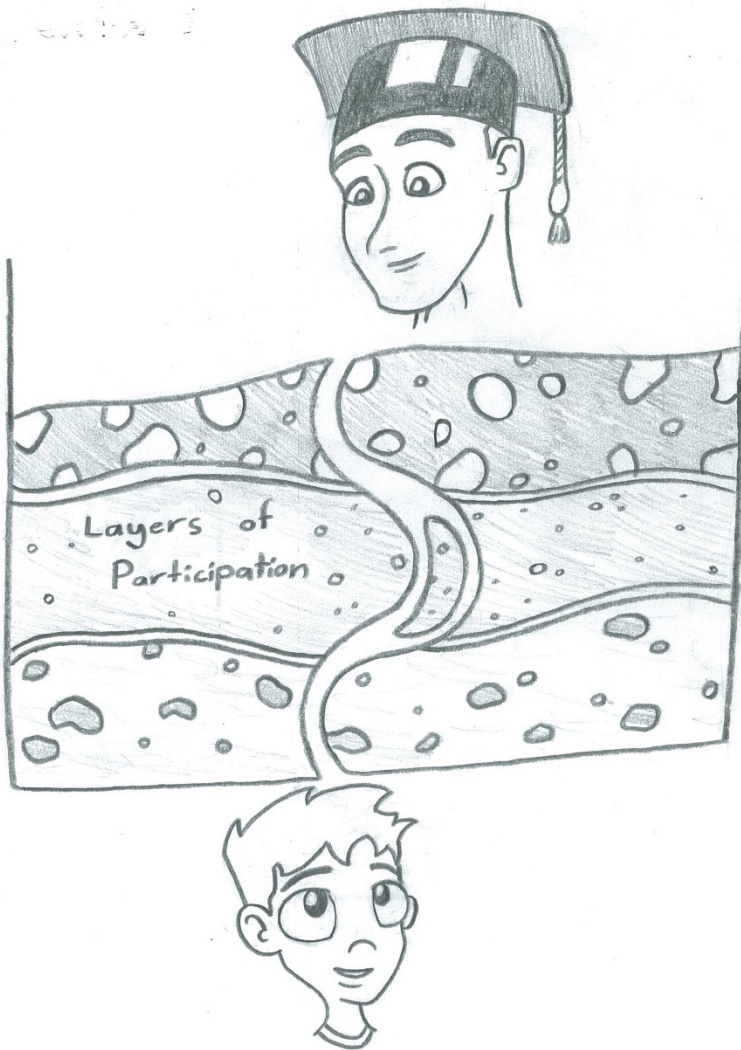
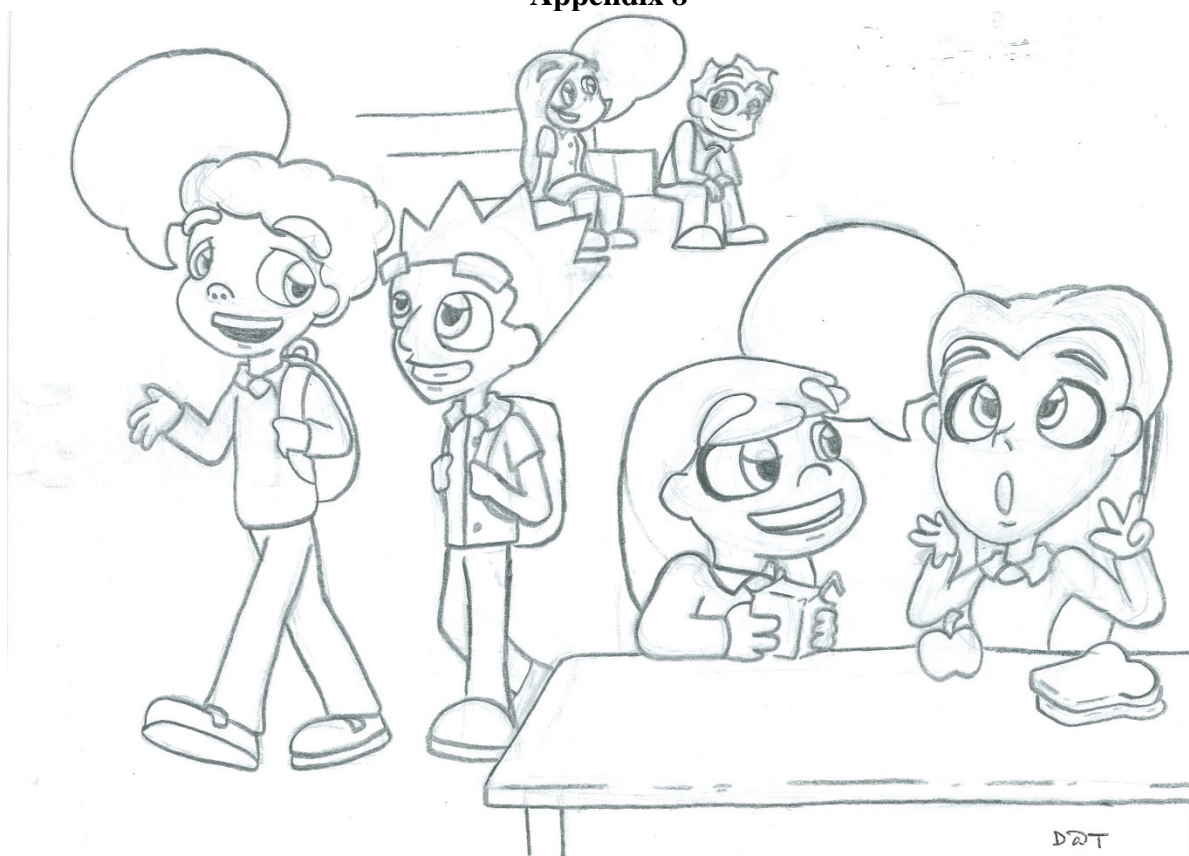


Figure 7

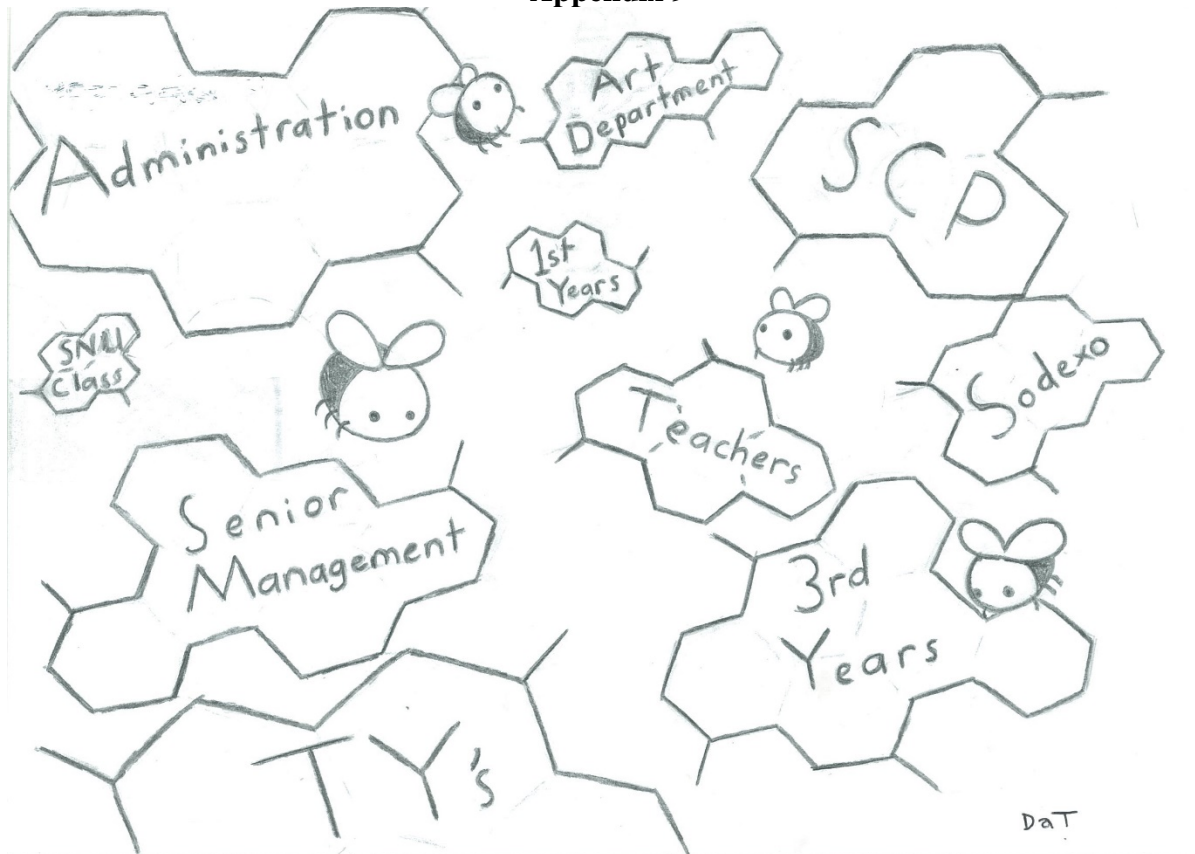


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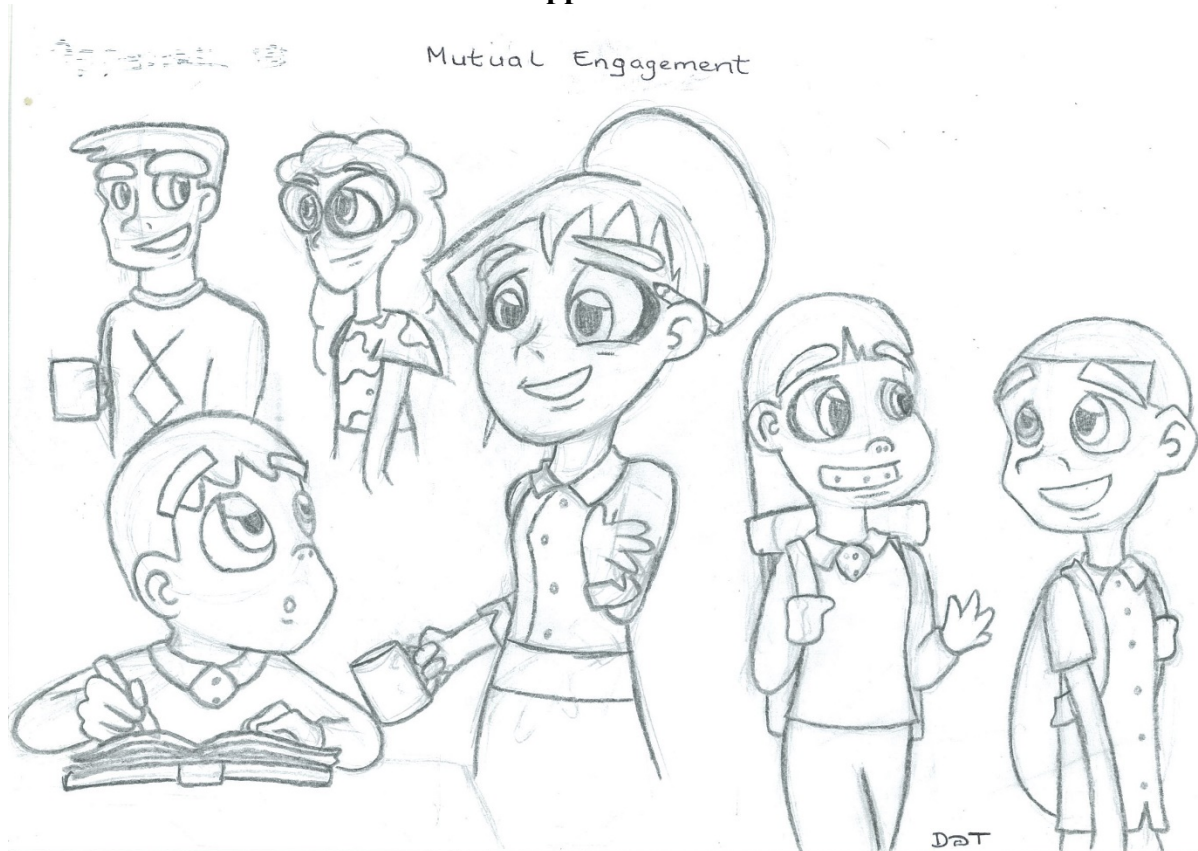
Appendix 8



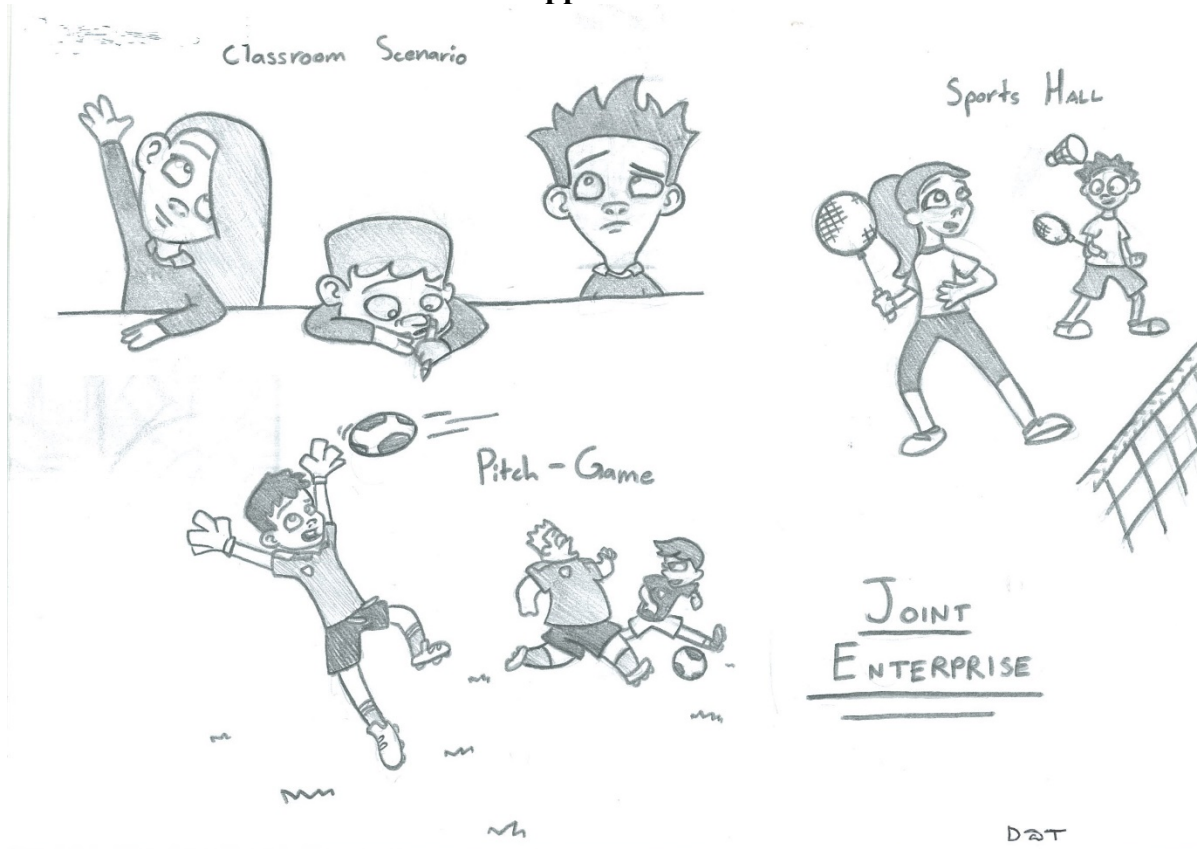
Appendix 9



Appendix 10



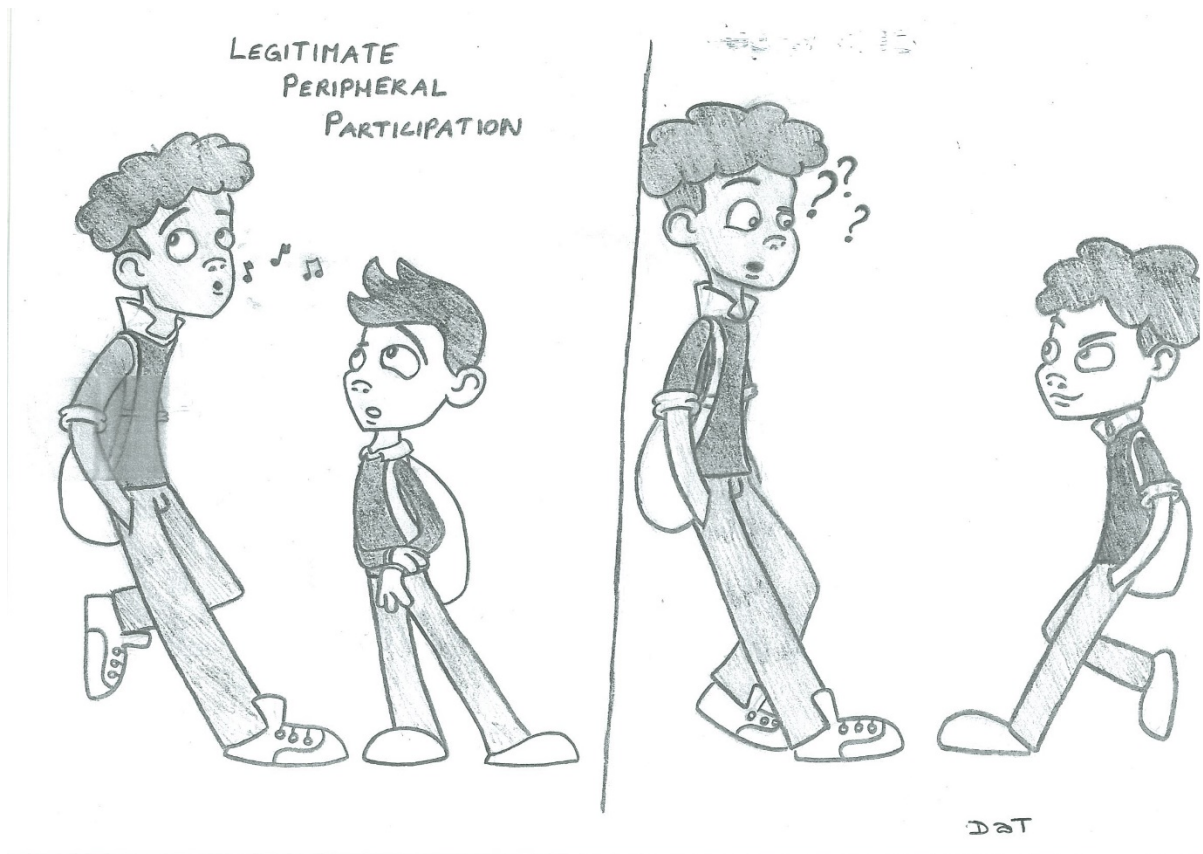
Appendix 11



Appendix 12



Appendix 13



Appendix 14 SREC



UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

Imelda Mulhall,
Department of Education

14th March 2013

Oifig an Leas - Uachtarán Taighde
agus Nuálaíochta
Office of the Vice President
for Research and Innovation

Urlár 4, Bloc E,
Áras na hEolaíochta Bia,
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh,
Bóthar an Choláiste,
Corcaigh, Éire.

4th Floor, Block E,
Food Science Building,
University College Cork,
College Road, Cork, Ireland.

T +353 (0)21 4903500
E vpresearch@ucc.ie
www.ucc.ie

Dear Imelda,

Firstly, please accept our sincere apologies for the delay in replying to you.

Thank you for submitting your research (project entitled "The Voiced Experiences of Pupil and Teacher in Secondary School Amalgamation-Tales of Identity, Agency and Power") to SREC for ethical perusal. I am pleased to say that we see no ethical impediment to your research as proposed and we are happy to grant approval.

We wish you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sean Hammond

Chair of Social Research Ethics Committee

Professor Anita R. Maguire BSc PhD CChem MRSC
Vice President for Research and Innovation

Ollscoil na hÉireann, Corcaigh
National University of Ireland, Cork

Appendix 15

22nd March 2013

Re: Informed consent

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a member of the Teaching Staff of _____ and currently a student on the Cohort PhD in Education Programme at University College Cork. As part of this course I will be undertaking research on the newly amalgamated school setting in _____.

This will involve a small - scale pilot study during April/May 2013. The full - scale study will take place in the academic year 2013/2014. The enclosed information sheet should clarify any of the questions that you may have in relation to this.

It is a necessary and ethical aspect of the research process that every member of the school community's informed consent is obtained. I would appreciate if the attached consent form could be filled out and returned to the **class tutor** by Friday March 22nd. I thank you in advance for your co-operation and participation in this research. I hope that the research will give a voice to the lived experiences of our school.

Yours sincerely,

Imelda Mulhall

Business Studies Teacher

Information Sheet

Purpose of the study:

As part of the requirements of the Cohort PhD in Education, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with looking at the newly amalgamated school setting.

What will the study involve?

The study will involve observing behaviour and talking directly with teachers and pupils in the research site.

The pilot study will take place in April/May 2013, with the full - scale study to take place in the academic year 2013/2014.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you are a member of the school community and have valuable contributions regarding amalgamation, which are relevant to this study.

Do you have to take part?

The answer is no! You will be asked to sign a consent form signalling your consent to participate in this study.

You have the option of withdrawing before the study commences, even if you have agreed to participate, or discontinuing after the data collection has started. As the data may be collected through interview you will be given the opportunity of withdrawing within two weeks of data collection, to allow for any afterthoughts that may arise.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, in as far as possible. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information which you give?

The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my lead supervisor a second supervisor, and an external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students. The study may be published in a research journal.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

I do not envisage any disadvantages associated with your participation.

Who has reviewed this study?

The study has also been approved by the Education Department at University College Cork.

Any further queries?

If you need any further information you can contact me at the following: Imelda Mulhall

Consent Form

I _____ agree to participate in *Imelda Mulhall's* Research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with *Imelda Mulhall* to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguising extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below.

Please tick one box

I agree to quotations/publications of extracts from my interview. ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview. ☐

Student Signature _____ Class _____

Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix 16

Focus group protocol- STAFF CPB

APPROXIMATE TIME: 30 MINS

QUESTION	PROMPTS/PROBES
<p>INTRODUCTION/ICE BREAKER</p> <p>STAFF WILL HAVE COMPLETED TWO EXERCISES IN ADVANCE OF THE SESSION.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My Professional Story-Line 2. SWOT analysis with 3 strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats of our new school. 	<p>I WILL ASK A FEW STAFF MEMBERS IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO EXPLAIN WHERE THEY ARE NOW IN THE PROFESSIONAL STORY LINE. THEY WILL ALL HAVE WRITTEN THIS AT THE BACK OF THEIR SHEET SO I WILL GET A LENS INTO EVERYONES STORY (PARTICULARLY THE LAST 3 YEARS) AND WHY?</p> <p>I WILL PROCEED WITH ASKING A FEW ABOUT <u>THE STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS.</u></p>
<p><u>COLLEGIALITY</u></p> <p>TELL ME ABOUT A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY HERE AT CPB?</p> <p>WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO CHAT WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES?</p> <p>HAS THIS CHANGED SINCE THE AMALGAMATION?</p> <p>WHAT ARE THE MAIN TOPICS DISCUSSED?</p>	<p>WHATS LIFE LIKE FOR YOU HERE?</p>

PRACTICE/INTERACTION:

**HAS YOUR TEACHING
PRACTICE HAS CHANGED
SINCE THE AMALGAMATION?**

**CAN YOU GIVE ME AN
EXAMPLE OF THIS CHANGE?**

**HOW HAS THIS CHANGE
AFFECTED YOUR SUBJECT
DEPT, SELF, COLLEAGUES?**

**DO YOU FEEL THAT
AMALGAMATION HAS
AFFECTED YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR
STUDENTS?**

**HOW DO YOU FEEL THAT
STUDENTS HAVE ADJUSTED
TO THE CHANGE?**

**WOULD YOU REGARD THE
OVERALL CHANGE AS
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE AND
WHY?**

**DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE
ADEQUATELY
PREPARED/SUPPORTED
DURING THE PROCESS?**

**CAN YOU GIVE ME AN
EXAMPLE TO SUPPORT YOUR
VIEWS?**

**THESE QUESTIONS WILL
PROBE INTO –WHAT DO
PEOPLE SAY AND DO IN CPB**

COMMUNICATION:

**THIS WILL ALSO OVERLAP
WITH PRACTICE**

**WHAT ARE THE MAIN
METHODS OF
COMMUNICATION USED IN
THIS SCHOOL TO
COMMUNICATE WITH PEERS,
PUPILS, AND MANAGEMENT?**

**HOW EFFECTIVE DO YOU
REGARD COMMUNICATION
METHODS IN THIS SCHOOL?**

**HOW HAS COMMUNICATION
CHANGED SINCE THE
AMALGAMATION?**

**CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE
TO ILLUSTRATE THIS?**

Appendix 17
PILOT ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

BIG IDEAS	STUDENT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	STAFF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
<i>IDENTITY</i>	FOCUS GROUP SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PHOTOGRAPHS OF FAVOURITE PLACE IN SCHOOL	FOCUS GROUP SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW –STUDENT TEACHER, STAFF MEMBER.
<i>MEANING</i>	DAILY RESEARCHER DIARY DRAWINGS OF WHAT SCHOOL MEANS TO PUPILS EXAMINATION OF ART DISPLAYS AND PHOTO-VOICE.	DAILY RESEARCHER DIARY
<i>PRACTICE</i>	DAILY RESEARCHER DIARY OBSERVATION-SCHOOL ATHLETES, DAILY SCHOOL- LIFE, SCHOOL AWARDS NIGHT, SUMMER SHOW.	DAILY RESEARCHER DIARY OBSERVATION – STAFFROOM PRACTICE, STAFF MEETING, MAMMA MIA SIG-A-LONG, END OF SCHOOL OUTING.
<i>COMMUNITITES OF PRACTICE</i>		FOCUS GROUP OBSERVATION

Identity:

A semi-structured interview with a student and also one with a teacher was held.

A student teacher in the school was asked to write a brief account of their time in the school.

A group of first year students were asked to draw their representation of the school.

A purposeful random sample of students from each year group were given a disposable camera and asked to take a picture of their favourite place in the school. They were then asked to write a brief account of same.

An examination was conducted of some of the visual representations put forward particularly by the Art Department during the period. These are displayed in a prominent position at the main entrance to the school.

The re-launch of a new school website took place during the piloting period. This website provides a very active window into what is valued practice in the school.

Results/Insights:

The interview with the teacher was insightful from the perspective that it revealed that despite the busy nature of the school environment there was an overall feeling that we had adjusted well to the change.

Our school has really expanded with a greater number of teachers and pupils and that did take some adjustment initially, we are now more comfortable with the building and more comfortable with each other (Cáit, May 2013).

The first -year group of students drew their representations of the school. These ranged from liking eating the sausage rolls in the canteen to the facilities in the P.E Dept.

I like football in the school, I like P.E, I like the food, I feel happy at break, I love sport, and it is intimidating sometimes (Jane, May 2013).

The sample of photographs taken by the students of their favourite place around the school included the newly opened pitch which is a good place for students to socialise and play a game of soccer or football with friends whilst keeping fit. It is an easy way to mix with others and make new friends. The seating area on the main stairs was chosen, because it is at the centre of the school, and it allows you to view everything that is happening around you. There is no separation from other years because anyone can sit there unlike the different

floors and canteen areas for junior and senior cycle students. I got a good insight into some of the student favourite areas in the school as well as their overall sense of belonging in this new environment.

The re-launch of a new school website in the pilot research period, with the help of a parent on the parent's association saw the school website being a very active information resource. It was regularly updated with news and information of school events. It carried information on school success in sporting and academic life as well as examination information.

Meaning:

Using a socio-cultural lens, a focus group with Leaving Certificate students and another with a group of five teachers was held.

Results/Insights:

The focus group with the female teachers reflected the overall sense of belonging in this staff that they felt. The focus group comprised of young female teachers. They spoke about the “freshness” that the amalgamation had brought and no longer feeling like outsiders in the staffroom. They spoke about the “Thursday Club” that had emerged since December. This is a social space for teachers to meet on Thursday evenings and allows them to offload any of the school issues that are bothering them.

Everyone is so much happier for getting it off their chest, it really helps coming back in here the next day that you've told people you can trust and it's kind of therapy (Máire, May 2013).

This focus group also gave me a lens into the male community of practice existing in the school. The prevalence of the Macho Male was evident from the female teachers' interactions with male staff.

I concluded that in my main study it would be useful to have a male focus group or a mixed gender focus group. This would be interesting to tease out some of the issues highlighted in the pilot study.

Practice:

Observation of the research participants was recorded in the researcher's diary on a daily basis during the pilot study. This involved an ongoing observation of school and staffroom life. This included events in the school calendar involving both students and teachers. These events included the school awards night, the school's athletic events, the Leaving Certificate Graduation mass, the inaugural Summer Show, a staff night out at a sing-a-long to Mama Mia and an end of year staff outing to Whiddy Island. The final staff meeting of this academic year was held during the period.

Results/Insights:

My researcher's daily diary allowed me to log observations and events in the six - week pilot period. Entries in the diary trace staff interactions and student exchanges. The following excerpt is from April 12th, 2013.

At morning break there is a student council bake sale, I go and buy a cake. When I get back to the staffroom our table is laid out with a cake and sweets. The cake has a candle for my 40th birthday today (Researcher Diary, 12-04-2013).

It would be more helpful for my full-scale study if I could note the diary entries under key headings like Identity, Meaning, Practice and Communities of Practice.

Communities of Practice:

A focus group with 5 teachers gave key insights into the social nature of learning with the 'Thursday Club', and Male table being discussed. My research diary also provides evidence of Communities of Practice.

Results/Insights:

The teachers' focus group revealed the supportive nature of the 'Thursday Club' with one teacher commenting:

It makes a difference all the same if there is something wrong, I definitely have 5 or 6 people who I could get to support me, I could definitely go to them and trust them with what I'm telling them, in fact they offer to help me out or advise me in a situation (Saoirse, May 2013).

The Thursday Club meet regularly on a Thursday evening, enjoy a meal, go to the local cinema. They organised a trip to London over the Easter holidays and have arranged to meet up over the summer holidays.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), communities of practice are socio-culturally organised places of shared knowledge, characterised by evolving membership, as newcomers move from being novices to becoming more expert participants through situated learning. Participation in the social practices of a group produces an evolving form of identity. My researcher daily diary provided evidence of these movements from a staff perspective as staff seating arrangement and movement could be noted.

Pilot testing this research study was very beneficial in fine-tuning the research design for the main study. In the pilot study I was able to "try out" (Baker, 194, p.182) particular research instruments like visual research methodologies. I found that this data collection method was a very appropriate means of eliciting student voice and choose to use this in my full - scale research. I was also able to assess the feasibility of conducting too many focus groups, semi-structured interviews as I saw just how much data could be harvested in the time frame. I was also able to evaluate the quality of the data collected from the various instruments over the 6-week time frame. I was able to discard any unnecessary questions from the semi-structured interview protocol. Hence the conduction of the pilot study from April-May 2013 was a very valuable exercise in preparation for the rolling out of the full -scale study in September 2013.

Again, due to the emergent nature of this study this change and adjustment were a necessary part of my research journey.

Appendix 18

Parents' Association Coláiste Fionn

In partnership with School Management, the Board of management, teachers and students the newly formed Parents' Association of Coláiste Fionn's objectives are:

To enhance the school experience for families by facilitating communication among parents, students, the School, the Board of Management, and the broader community.

The fostering of good relations between parents, teachers, students and the school authorities (Coláiste Fionn website, June 2014).

The Parents Association was set up following a General Meeting on the 21st of March 2013 when their new constitution was ratified. Parents were notified of this via a letter circulated to home. There was a formal request for funding in order to have a fully functional Parents Association. At the General Meeting it was felt that the best approach to fund the Association was to ask each family for a small voluntary subscription of €10 per family. This would be used for the following:

1. Our association meetings are not covered by the School's insurance and we must pay this insurance ourselves. Insurance costs for 2013 are €440 which covers all Parents Association meetings, events, seminars (e.g. next Thursdays)
2. Cover expert speakers' expenses for workshops (e.g. speaker expenses for our drugs and alcohol workshop on Thursday next)
3. Day today running costs, i.e. Paper, photocopying, stamps, texts and envelopes.

The Parents Association over the coming year hope to hold other seminars on the issues raised by parents in their recent survey, e.g. bullying/cyber bullying etc. The Parents Association members were at the General Meeting and a new committee would be elected annually. The inaugural meeting had the election of the first Coláiste Fionn Parents Association and they had the task of surveying parents to find out some of the main priority issues they would like information on. This newly formed community of practice had to analyse these surveys and organised the first information evening for parents on Drugs and

Alcohol. This took place on Thursday 11th April 2013. The following speakers were lined up for the evening. Chris Black (HSE Southern Regional Drugs Task Force Co-ordinator) spoke on the level of the problem of alcohol and drug use in secondary school children on a national level and informed parents about the specific local services available to our youth. Damien White (Local Community Garda) went through the judicial aspects of drug and alcohol use and shared his knowledge of the various drugs that are available on the street. Anna Fitzgerald (Youth and Community Worker), talked about parental responsibilities and gave some ideas and how these duties could be carried out. She also educated parents on how to recognise the signs that our young people might be misusing. The main objective of this meeting as outlined in the promotion literature was:

The objective of this meeting is to educate us as parents in relation to the issues surrounding drug and alcohol use among our children in our community and by so doing enable us to hopefully keep them safe (Coláiste Fionn Parents Association, April 2013).

Hence the Parents Association was set up by parents for parents in 2013 and hopes to address other issues like, School Bag Weight, Bullying & Cyberbullying, extra-Curricular Activities, School Uniform related, Nutrition and Traffic Management.

