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Covert Conversations: Disciplined Improvisation and Meaning-Making in the Masters (MA) Supervisory Relationship

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Activity System - an assembly of people or resources that are organized into a whole in order to accomplish a purposeful activity.

Activity Theory (AT) - a descriptive meta-theory or framework that seeks to explain how a number of activity systems interact with one another. It takes into account the context of the activity, the history of the persons involved, culture, the role of the artifact, motivations, and the lived experience of the relevant activity (Engeström, 2001).

Climate – is the existential meaning one attaches to the space one finds oneself in (Watsuji, 1961)

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) - is a neglected strand of Activity Theory, which elaborates on Activity Theory in two theoretically salient ways through the concepts of artifact-mediated and object-oriented action (Vygotsky, 1978: 40). CHAT proposes that human activity has a tripartite structure: where the relationship between human agents and objects in the environment are mediated by cultural means, tools and signs.

Micropolitics - The use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals within organizations (Ball, 1987)

Negotiated Knowledge - an AT term that describes how knowledge is negotiated when two activity systems come into contact with one another (Worthen, 2008).

Object Motive - the motivation a social actor has towards the object of any given activity.

Psychoactive Space - when a person's thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations take on symbolic significance in response to what they perceive to be happening in any given space (Lawley & Penny, 2000).

Relational Agency - a capacity to work with others to expand the object of an activity by applying the sense-making of others and to utilize the resources that come from that sense-making (Edwards, 2005: 9)

Risk – is a negative logic that is characterized by a change from the management and distribution of material 'goods' to the management and distribution of 'bads' in society and institutions. An example of this would be the management of knowledge related to danger, risk assessment and the back-up systems required to protect against such a reality (Beck, 1992).

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AT	Activity Theory
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
HE	Higher Education
MA	Masters Degree
NK	Negotiated Knowledge

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution and, except where otherwise stated, is the original work of the author.

Signed

Thomas Joseph Moynihan

Date

ABSTRACT: Covert Conversations: Disciplined Improvisation and Meaning- Making in the Masters (MA) Supervisory Relationship

Rationale: This study takes a novel approach to understanding Masters (MA) supervision in the Humanities by focusing upon the supervisory relationship itself. It investigates how academic identities are formed and transformed by the relational dynamics between supervisor and supervisee. It does this through dialoguing with the voices of <u>both</u> MA supervisors and supervisees using a Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework. In so doing, this research argues for a re-evaluation of how MA supervision is conceptualised and proposes a new theoretical framework for conceptualising MA supervision as a relational phenomenon.

Aim: This research asks the question: "What are the relational dynamics in MA supervision?" It attempts to answer this question by analysing how both supervisors and supervisees understand the MA supervisory relationship.

Method: The research design was derived from an Activity Theory-influenced methodology. Data collection procedures included the administration of Activity Theory Logs, individual semi-structured interviews with both supervisors and supervisees and the completion of reflective journals. Grounded Theory was used to analyse the data. The sample for the study consists of three supervisor-supervisee dyads from three disciplines in the Humanities. Data was collected over the course of one academic year, 2010-2011.

Findings: The findings from this research are presented under six headings (see chapters 4 to 6). These are as follows:

- **The Iterative Negotiation of Ambiguity/clarity**: It emerged from the data that MA supervisors repeatedly developed strategies to clarify the ambiguities, associated with MA supervisory practice, into meaningful elements. These strategies were found to inform their professional identity as academics. This negotiation of ambiguity into clarity is an iterative process that is repeated at every stage of the supervisory relationship and with each supervisee undergoing supervision. Three types of ambiguity were found to be present for MA supervisors: Situational Ambiguity, Quality Ambiguity, and Subjective Ambiguity.

- **Boundary Work:** Psychological boundaries were found to be an essential part of how supervisees negotiated their identity within MA supervision. These boundaries served to distinguish supervisees' personal identity from their MA researcher identity, while simultaneously enabling them to create an academic identity that met the objectives behind supervision and research. The data showed that MA supervisees were motivated to construct three types of psychological boundaries in supervision: Relationship Boundaries, Power Boundaries, and Performance Boundaries.

- **Supervisory Reciprocity:** A shared relational dynamic that impacted upon MA supervisory practice was Supervisory Reciprocity. Supervisory reciprocity was found to hold an important emotional resonance for both MA supervisors and supervisees as it encouraged the investment of trust in the supervisory relationship and the research process as well as promoting the development of relational agency within the shared space of MA supervision.

- **Temporal Ordering of Supervisory Space:** MA supervision is time-limited and the space of supervision was found to be ordered by the time spent together by the supervisor and supervisee. The findings from the data revealed that supervisory time can be categorised in two qualitatively different ways: Contractual Time and Quality Time. Contractual Time was found to be understood as a finite, bureaucratic form of time accounted for at institutional and individual levels. In contrast to this, quality time proved to be much more significant to the supervisory relationship and was defined as time spent explicitly dealing with problems and issues related to the construction of academic knowledge and identity.

- **The Micropolitics of Supervisory Space:** It was recognised in the findings that the micropolitics of supervisiory space not only refered to conflicts and the way in which social actors exert authority or influence, but also entailed the cooperation, collaboration and the support each party gives to one another in order to achieve certain future-orientated goals. Although power tends to be implicit within the MA supervision, it emerged from this research that the supervisory relationship is informed by how power is negotiated and utilised by both parties in the dyad.

- **The Disciplined Improvisation of Academic Identity:** MA supervision emerged from the data as being a fluid site of identity construction, where the academic identities of both parties in the dyad are improvised in response to the Other in the MA supervisory relationship and the specific requirements of the academic discipline.

Significance of Research: This research recognises that both individual and shared relational dynamics play an important role in MA supervision. Individual dynamics, such as supervisors' iterative negotiation of ambiguity/clarity and supervisees' boundary work, revealed that both parties attempt to negotiate a separation between their professional-academic identities and personal identities. However, an inherent paradox emerged when the shared relational dynamics of MA supervision were investigated. It was found that the shared space created by the supervisory relationship did not only exist in a physical setting, but was also psychoactive in nature and held strong emotional resonances for both parties involved. This served to undermine the separation between professional-academic and personal identities. As a result, this research argues that the interaction between the individual and shared relational dynamics in MA supervision enables, for both supervisors and supervisees, a disciplined improvisation of academic identity.

Dedication

Many thanks to the lecturers and my fellow students from the first Cohort PhD in Education. A very special thanks goes to Julia Walsh and Paul Conway, my supervisors, for navigating me through the choppy waters of this thesis. Thank you to all those who agreed to participate in this research. Thank you to my family and friends for all their support over the last four years.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why Research the MA Supervisory Relationship?

1.0 Introduction

What happens in postgraduate supervision sessions? There is a veil of secrecy that surrounds what transpires within the supervisory encounter. What do supervisors and supervisees talk about? How do they understand this very specific academic relationship and the process of doing research? These are the covert conversations that pervade academia, inducting novice scholars, creating knowledge and building personal and professional relationships.

The examination of educational relationships is not new. One of the earliest writings on the subject can be found in Plato's Early Socratic Dialogues. This research continues this intellectual lineage. The type of educational relationship found in postgraduate supervision can be found to echo some of elements highlighted in Plato's iconic work: specifically the roles played by active learning, self-examination, the appreciation for the complexity of knowledge and expertise, the conflation of professional and personal excellence and that students become self-sufficient in their pursuit of learning. This study stands upon the shoulders of giants and in some small way hopes to reveal some of the overlooked nuances that inform the relational dynamics that inform a specific educational relationship – that of Masters (MA) supervision.

This thesis is about Masters supervision in the Humanities. It focuses on how relational elements between MA supervisor and supervisee impact upon the experience of MA supervision. It makes known the covert conversations that inform this educational process. It looks at how the supervisory relationship influences how Masters (MA) supervision is precieved by both supervisors and supervisees. It analyses how the

interaction that occurs between MA supervisors and supervisees gives rise to specific relational dynamics that informs the experience of MA research. And last, but not least, this thesis presents a new theoretical framework, drawing upon Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), for understanding the dynamics that underpin postgraduate supervision at Masters (MA) level.

This thesis is an argument for the need to critically re-examine how MA supervision is understood in the academia. The purpose behind this argument is supported by a diverse range of experience, evidence and theory. The claims that are made in this piece of writing are not just exercises in reportage of what participants said about their experience of MA supervision, but are also supported by the sense that I have tried to make of them. In the course of this research I have tried to develop theories about both supervisors and supervisees engagement with MA supervision, but only through constant dialogue with the data. The majority of academic investigation into the phenomenon of MA supervision prefers to focus on either the MA supervisor or supervisee's perspective, this piece of writing documents the voices of <u>both</u> the MA supervisor and supervisee. In this thesis, we will see that a unique synergy exists between these two voices, which both supports and contradicts some of the accepted theories on postgraduate supervision.

1.1 Background

My name is Joe Moynihan. I am a college lecturer. I lecture full-time in Cork Institute of Technology and part-time in University College Cork. I have spent the majority of my working life in academia and still retain a fascination with its orientation towards learning and knowledge acquisition. It is out of this fascination that the nucleus of the idea for this research was borne.

I find myself in a triple bind when it comes to supervision: I have been supervised, I am currently being supervised (by two different supervisors!) and I am also supervising students myself. Having experienced academic supervision from three different perspectives, one core element seems to be continually present – the relationship between

supervisor and supervisee. Yet, this element seems to be neglected in the literature on academic supervision. I hope this research goes some ways towards redressing the balance.

I have had both positive and negative experiences associated with postgraduate supervision. My experience as an MA supervisee was primarily a formative and a positive one. I can safely say that my experience of MA supervision changed my life. I would not be working in academia where it not for the supervisory relationship I forged with my supervisor. If I am honest, it is the essential nature of this relationship, and the transformative effect it has had on my life, that drew me towards investigating MA supervision as a PhD topic. It was characterized by an open, honest relationship, intellectual discussion and networking opportunities. I was hooked on research as a result.

However, this positive experience was not to be transferred to my next experience of postgraduate supervision. I was a year and a half into a PhD when my supervisor, at the time, developed cancer of the upper palate and could no longer supervise me. I was allocated another supervisor whose supervision style was not as accommodating as those who I knew before. One meeting stands out clearly in my mind. I had just finished and submitted two chapters and had arranged a supervision meeting. I met with my new supervisor who went on to say that there was absolutely no redeeming merit in anything I had written, and that my work was intellectually self-indulgent (although he expressed this in a more colourful and derogatory manner). He then went on to say that if I continued in this vein I at the very best would end up being nothing more than a "dilettante" and should quit the course now and get a job in a call centre. Needless to say, I was shocked by this attitude as my original supervisor was nothing but supportive of my work. The very next day, as I went to print off some articles in the postgraduate common room, I found that my new supervisor had recycled the chapters I had handed up to him the day before as student printing paper.

Following this experience, I enrolled on a counseling and psychotherapy course. On this course there was a strong emphasis upon the importance of relational understandings in therapeutic settings. It opened my eyes to the roles played by emotions, cognitive processes and how negotiation is developed in partnership. I graduated and was a practicing psychotherapist for four years before going into lecturing fulltime. I suppose completing this PhD on the topic of MA relationships involves an intertwining of these two lived aspects of my life, the academic and the therapeutic relationship. My own thinking on the subject of postgraduate supervision has been honed and developed through my personal experiences of being academically supervised, being psychotherapeutically supervised and supervising myself. It could even be argued that doing this PhD is the ultimate personalized form of therapy! My experiences have gone along way towards sensitizing my research to various nuances that may be overlooked by others. I do sincerely hope that this research will go some way towards raising awareness of and sensitizing others to the relational dynamics that are at play within postgraduate supervision.

1.2 Overview of Thesis

In Higher Education (HE), revisions to research funding and to postgraduate course delivery have, in recent years, resulted in significant changes to how postgraduate supervision is thought of in both a macro-political and a micro-political level (Morley, 2006; Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Mayuzumi, Motobayashi, Nagayama, & Takeuchi, 2007). From the macro-political perspective, economic changes have led successive governments to re-evaluate the purpose of Higher Education, the marketability of certain modes of knowledge and how graduates are prepared for the workplace. Researchers and policy makers in both Ireland and the international context have indicated that employers need a highly skilled labour force with technological skills, occupational knowledge and the ability to both make use of and participate in the knowledge economy (Chen, 2012; Delfmann & Koster, 2012; Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2011; Bastalich, 2010).

In Irish HE, a ripple effect has been felt from economic pressures effecting employability, education policy and supervisory practice (Hazelkorn & Massaro, 2011;

Loxley & Seery, 2012). As a result, HE institutions have become more accountable for the production and quality of the research produced (Jayasuriya, 2010; Kallison Jr. & Cohen, 2010). This means that HE has become responsible for workplace needs, skill development and the establishment of marketable research platforms (Warhurst, 2008; Craswell, 2007). These political and economic factors are not unique to Ireland, but have been well documented in international contexts (Andrews & Higson, 2008). It should be noted that these factors are markedly different to the professional and epistemological concerns that traditionally informed research production and postgraduate supervisory practice (Biesta, 2007; Flora & Hirt, 2010; Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Chen, 2012; Bastalich, 2010).

Running parallel to the macro-political viewpoint is the micro-political re-evaluation of the postgraduate relationship itself. It is this micro-political viewpoint that will be the main focus of this thesis. In the literature this viewpoint can be most saliently seen in the writings on postgraduate research supervision and effective supervisory strategies. There are three strands of thought that inform this position. These can be categorized as follows: a focus on supervisory processes (Samara, 2006; Kandiko & Kinchin, 2012; Sambrook, Stewart, & Roberts, 2008); student and institutional factors (Manathunga 2005); and research mentoring (Achinstein, 2002). Each of these issues will be elaborated on in the literature review chapter.

It would be naïve to assume that these two points are separate non-related entities, yet even a cursory reading of the literature reveals that the micro and macro viewpoints are part of the same phenomenon (McCallin & Nayar, 2012). Obviously, the challenges facing supervisors and supervisees are complicated in a context where fast, effective supervision is seen to be both an economic and political imperative (Grant, 2010; Cornforth & Claiborne, 2008). Attempts have been made to map the tensions that emerge out of these challenges. For example, Coralie McCormack (2004) draws attention to the conflict that arises out of student expectations related to their engagement with research and the institutional perspective on research as a means to enhance employment capability.

Supervisors also fall victim to contextual tensions, as Gill and Bernard (2008) illustrate in their study on the divided loyalty that supervisors feel between their roles as teachers of research and the responsibility they feel for the pastoral care of students who struggle with multiple responsibilities that exist externally to academia. Elaborating on this phenomenon, it may be argued that the supervisory role has evolved beyond its original research remit and now includes a quality control role, an advisory role, a guiding role and a supporting role (De Beer & Mason, 2009). However, writers in this field tend to focus on the viewpoint of only one party within the supervisory dyad, be it the supervisor or the supervisee. This research not only looks at the phenomenon of postgraduate supervision from both the supervisors and the supervisees' points of view, but also investigates the psychosocial dynamics at play within the space created by the supervisory relationship itself.

From an educational perspective, the alliance that arises out of MA supervision displays some unique characteristics. First, MA supervision is a break from the learning relationships that occur at undergraduate level, in that both parties roles expand to take on new responsibilities and are confronted with new challenges - yet this expansion of role seems to build upon past learning experiences, both positive and negative. Second, the relationship is a professional one directed towards the production of a disciplinary specific piece of academic writing. Third, despite the emphasis upon the production of an academic product (the MA dissertation), there is a parallel priority given to the process of engaging with research and how this informs one's developmental trajectory. Fourth, the space created by effective MA supervision enables the safe performance of academic identity and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge, insight and support. MA supervision remains a under researched aspect of Higher Education, overshadowed by the wealth of research on Doctorate students. It is time to shed light on those shadows.

As the title of this PhD thesis suggests, what transpires within MA supervision tends to be covert. This piece of writing attempts to make known this hidden area of Higher Education. There are five salient aspects highlighted in this text. These are

ambiguity/clarity, professionalism, boundaries, supervisory reciprocity and supervisory space. In order to familiarise the reader to these lines of thought, I want to signpost each one in this introduction before elaborating on them in the main body of the text.

Chapter 2 dialogues with the current literature on postgraduate supervision and theories related to educational relationships using Activity Theory (AT) as a sensitising framework. It outlines the distinction between MA and PhD supervision. The focus of this thesis is upon the relational aspects of MA supervision. In light of this, the AT concept of negotiation was used to frame and highlight the relational elements at play in the literature on supervision pedagogy, academic professionalism, research mentoring and the framing of postgraduate supervision as a risk event. This review of the literature is used to frame and contextualise the arguments made in the claims and findings chapters.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology used for this research. The research design was derived from an Activity Theory-influenced methodology. Data collection procedures included the administration of Activity Theory Logs and individual semi-structured interviews with both supervisors and supervisees. Grounded Theory was used to analyse the data. The timeline for this research project began in September 2008 with the commencement of the first Cohort PhD in Education in University College Cork, The data collection and the analysis of the data began simultaneously in September 2010 and the first draft of this PhD thesis was submitted in September 2012.

Chapters 4 to 6 analyse the data that was collected during the course of the study. Chapter 4 looks at how the MA supervisory relationship is individually understood by both supervisors and supervisees. Ambiguity was a recurrent theme that emerged for both parties in the dyad. However, it was found that each party negotiated supervisory ambiguity differently. Professionalism is a way for MA supervisors to deal with the ambiguity of postgraduate supervisory practice. MA supervision motivates supervisors to structure a specific supervisory identity, to iteratively negotiate ambiguity into clarity, and to enable the supervisee during the various stages of their developmental research

trajectory. Among MA supervisors, this repeated negotiation of ambiguity/clarity means developing supervisory strategies to clarify meaning and identity in the educational relationship. These strategies entail integrating supervisees into the research culture, being accountable for their part in the supervisory process and constantly adapting and evolving the role they play in the supervisory relationship. They are manufactured to reduce the element of risk associated with inducting novice scholars into the research community.

This chapter also presents activity theory logs and interview data from MA supervisees to show that they negotiate the ambiguity associated with the MA supervisory relationship through the creation of boundaries. Boundaries are especially important to supervisees as they give them a sense of control over the experience of being supervised and protected themselves from the risk of having their nascent academic identities negated. In the supervisory relationship itself, it was found that the supervisees themselves felt that the act of doing research was primarily a performative act, separate from their non-academic selves, that was evaluated by their supervisor and a generalised academic audience. These supervisees gave voice to the idea that the erection of psychological boundaries within the MA supervisory context, provided them with some element of protection against criticism of their emerging academic identity.

Chapter 5 argues that we need to re-evaluate how we understand MA supervision if we take account of the shared relational elements that are present in the lived experience of supervision. It reframes postgraduate supervision in terms of a psychoactive space brought about by the supervisory relationship itself, where identity and knowledge can be re-negotiated and re-imagined. It utilises the concept of space to theorise the interactions that occur at the meeting point between MA supervisors and supervisees. A key element, I argue, is that supervisory space is a paradoxical, and is not ordered physically, but is structured using temporal elements that are unique to Higher Education. This psychoactive space arises out of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. A particular element that was found to inform the MA relationship was supervisory reciprocity.

Reciprocity plays an important role in MA supervision by encouraging rapport, stimulating creativity in the relationship and by developing the capacity for dialogue between the two parties in the dyad. But this type of reciprocity needs to be differentiated from other forms of reciprocity that are outlined in the literature review, in that the reciprocity found in MA supervision is dependent upon relational agency and the development of trust. Relational agency in MA supervision was found to be a learned characteristic that does not encourage dependency but encourages independent thought and action. Supervisory reciprocity emerged as dependant upon both the supervisors and the supervisees ability to trust each other, to empathise with the other persons point of view, and the adoption of mentoring behaviour by the MA supervisor.

In MA supervision, these capacities are the property not just of the individuals that inhabit the supervisory dyad, but these capacities are also felt in future educational relationships. As they depend on collective as well as individual reciprocal exchanges of knowledge in contexts that include presentations, attendence at conferences, and engagement in related research networks. It was found that MA supervisors develop these capacitites by experiencing trust and relational agency in their own experience of being supervised; by experiencing the act of engaging with research as having a transformative effect on their life and career; and by developing the social capital of networks and relationships that encourage future engagement in a research culture. It is these elements that supervisors try and reciprocate in the relational space that they create with supervisees. Pursuing this line of thought does not give primacy to either supervisor or the supervisee, but instead forwards the idea that the space created by MA supervision is essentially a dialogue that can be both transformed or subverted by the actions of either member of the dyad.

The data also revealed that the space of MA was illustrated by two other shared relational dynamics: the temporal ordering of supervisory space and micropolitics. Supervisory space was found to be ordered according to two types of time. The first of these is contractual time, which is defined as being a bureaucratic form of temporal measurement

that needs to be accounted for at both individual and institutional levels. The second type of time , quality time, emerged as playing an instrumental role in the formation of the supervisory relationship. Quality time was characterised as time spent dealing with issues or problems associated with the construction of knowledge and academic identity, a characteristic that enabled the supervisory relationship to move forward. Micropolitics also constituted a shared relational dynamic in MA supervision. Micropolitics, in this context, refers to how power is negotiated by both parties in the MA dyad. The micropolitics in MA supervision were found to entail both conflictual and co-operative processes, meaning that the power dynamics present in the MA supervisory relationship were not the sole preserve of either party, but were open to negotiated in the shared space of MA supervision.

Chapter 6 attempts to merge the two points of view, that of both the MA supervisor and the supervisee, into a theoretical framework adapted from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). In this chapter, it is proposed that a hidden outcome of MA supervision is the disciplined improvisation of academic identity, where the academic actors in the supervisory dyad can locally improvise academic identity within the globalised HE structure of MA supervision. MA supervision is concieved of as being essentially another form of human relationship rife with ambiguities and uncertainies, despite its being framed in a formal academic setting. It is the participants and the objective behind the MA relationship that makes it unique, but it is how the struggles, ambiguities and paradoxes inherent in the relationship are improvisationally dealt with in the discipline-specific and structured context of the supervisory encounter that gives it momentum and an ultimate purpose for both parties. It is how these elements are negotiated that defines the experience of MA supervision as either a re-imagining of educational experience or the disavowal of academic identity. If we choose to locate MA supervision in a relational perspective, the interactions between both parties become of primary importance. It was found in the course of analysing the data that the academic identities are improvised through the disciplined interactions found in in MA supervision and that these identities emerge out of how the ambiguities associated with supervisory practice are clarified and

given meaning within the relationship itself. Out of these findings a new CHAT-influenced framework for understanding the MA supervisory relationship was developed.

1.3 Conclusion

Drawing upon the findings from the data, this thesis proposes a new theoretical framework for conceptualising the MA supervisory relationship. It does this through adopting a Cultural Historical Activity Theory perspective on the interactions that occur in the supervisory dyad. In itself, we will find that this new framework stresses the importance of ambiguity and contradiction in the formation of academic identity. This does not just apply to the MA supervisee but is of equal relevance to the MA supervisor as well. What this final chapter attempts to do is to negotiate a balance between the lived and the theoretical perspectives on postgraduate supervision by embracing the influential roles played by HE culture, professional development and life contexts. As we shall see, it is in the space that arises out of the supervisory encounter that future possibilities grounded in academic and learning identities take root and blossom*.

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* The 2010 American Psychological Association (APA) style of referencing was used throughout this PhD thesis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

MA Supervision: A Relational Perspective

Chapter Outline		
MA Supervision – A Relational Perspective		
1.	**What is MA Supervision?**	The difference between MA and PhD Supervision
2.	**How can MA Supervision be understood?**	Activity Theory as a Way to Understand the MA Supervisory Dyad
3.	**Negotiation in MA Supervision**	
i.	**Perspective**	• Supervision as Pedagogy • The Eleven Characteristics of Effective Supervision • Postgraduate Study as a Psychological Contract
ii.	**Emotional Charge**	• The professionalization of Academic Supervision • Professional Responsibility in HE • Psychological Boundaries • Supervision as a Living In-between Space
iii.	**Collectivity**	• Supervision as a Third Space • MA Supervision as Research Mentoring • The Developmental Approach to Mentoring • Expertise and Mentoring
iv.	**Breath**	• Risk and Postgraduate Research • Fourth Level Education as a Risk Adverse Organisation • The Induction of Novice Researchers as a Risk Event • Trust as an Overlooked Element in Postgraduate Supervision

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will dialogue with a number of literatures outlining MA supervision from a relational perspective in order to draw out some of the arguments surrounding the changing interpersonal and institutional relationships in Fourth Level Education. Key concepts from Activity Theory (AT) are used to contextualize MA supervision from a relational perspective. The areas under discussion include: the difference between Masters (MA) and Doctoral (PhD) Research; how AT can be used to understand the MA supervisory dyad; supervision as pedagogy; postgraduate study as a psychological contract; professionalism in HE; supervisory space; research mentoring; expertise, risk; and trust in the supervisory relationship.

The literature presented in this chapter will be used to frame the arguments made in the proceeding data analysis chapters. As we shall see MA supervision is a constantly evolving arena that merges both practical and theoretical concerns. MA supervision is distinct from other courses of postgraduate study, especially the PhD, as different motives inform the MA supervisory relationship. This is further elaborated upon when we begin to unpack the current literature that sees academic supervision as a form of pedagogy and mentoring behavior. Both positionings support the argument for recognizing the relational dynamics that inform MA supervision. However, attention also needs to be given to the growing wealth of literature that sees academic work, including postgraduate supervision, as risk management scenarios, a tendency that is witnessed in the increased emphasis upon professionalism and expert practice. These aspects in turn effect how trust, knowledge and academic identity are negotiated in the MA relationship, a relationship that up until now has been largely neglected in the educational literature.

2.1 What is MA supervision?

Before examining the current literature on supervision, I want to briefly review the arguments that surround the differences between Masters (MA) and Doctoral (PhD) research, especially in relation to the construction of knowledge and their location within

organizational contexts. Recently, there has been a revival of the 19th Century debate, exemplified by Newman (1976) and Humboldt (1976), about the nature of knowledge and its relevance to the postgraduate supervisory relationship. However, the majority of the literature, with very minor exception focuses upon the doctoral (PhD) experience (Winn, 1995). The rich educational seam of the PhD has been richly mined, and has yielded a wealth of information, which includes the impact of PhD research training, the supervisor-supervisee relationship and how to lessen the attrition rate of PhD students. A central facet of these studies is the way in which students are socialised into certain disciplines (Parry et al., 1994; Delamont et al., 1997a; Delamont et al., 2000) and the reactions of both supervisors and postgraduates to compulsory research training (Collinson & Hockey, 1997; Collinson, 1998). The same cannot be said for the Masters (MA) experience, which is all the more surprising due to the fact that the MA constitutes the first step into postgraduate education. There is an interesting point made by Collinson (1998), who argues that research is a craft not a skill, and therefore cannot be taught in a classroom context. This craft idea is linked to the apprenticeship model of research, which is exemplified in the literature by looking at the types of interactions of supervisors and students in various disciplines (Parry et al., 1994; Delamont et al, 1997b; Delmont et al., 2000). What has become evident from reading through the literature is a glaring oversight regarding the role played by the Masters degree's induction into research methods, especially the role of the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

2.1.1 The Professions versus the Professionals: The Difference between MA and PhD students

In Ireland, the coursework Master's degree has become the principal route for the delivery of continuing education to the professions (Drennan & Clarke, 2009). For example, in the area of Education, prior to 2011, teachers engaged in a Masters programme to gain seniority within their employment contexts. There was both a personal and an economic inducement to do this (Bovill, et al., 2010). A major difference between the Masters degree student and the doctorate student is the amount of experience in the research field and exposure to research methods. For example, the professional doctorate (such as the EdD) involves both taught components and a large written dissertation (Bowden, 2000;

Lunt, 2002), yet it is unusual for students who embark upon a Masters in Education to make explicit their desire to be immersed in research methods (Deem & Lucas, 2006). A key issue here is professionalisation (Elliott, 2001), since involvement in research, and the procurement of a doctorate is becoming a necessity for anyone who wishes to work in the Higher Education sector.

A division exists between how organizational institutions value and invest in Masters and Doctoral programmes. The differentiation between the Masters and Doctoral degree is primarily an ideological one, predicated upon the educational end-product: the Masters degree is seen to serve the professions (Bangs, 2008), whereas the Doctoral degree is seen to create the professionals (Aanerud et al., 2007). This ideological divide can be observed in the types of knowledge produced, the transferable skills developed, the practice/concept/technique relationship and the audiences towards which the knowledge is directed. It would be foolish to neglect these influences, as these form the backdrop upon which the supervisory relationship is played out.

Recently, the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQF) who are at the forefront of postgraduate innovation, circulated a consultation paper called *Strengthening the AQF: An Architecture for Australia's Qualifications* (2009). In this paper, they outline the key similarities and differences between the attributes and criteria that are representative of the Masters and the Doctoral degree. These are listed in table 2.1 below. This document clearly outlines the distinctions in attributes and criteria between MA and PhD study, and analogously it can be argued that the supervisory relationships that are geared towards the promotion of these attributes and criteria are also distinct from one another.

Table 2.1: The attributes and criteria of the MA and PhD degrees as outlined by AQF (2009:15)

Masters	Doctorate
Serving the professions	Creating the professionals
Masters Degree (Level 9) is "to prepare individuals to research and apply a body of knowledge in a range of contexts and/or as a pathway for further learning"	The doctorate degree's (Level 10) purpose is defined as being "to prepare individuals to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, with or without specific practical application"
Cognitive and technical skills to critically investigate, analyse and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theories to provide modified constructs	Attainment of a breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge "at a high level of advanced study to make a substantial original contribution to a field of learning through research"
Cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on professional theory and practice	Cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on professional theory and practice
Cognitive and technical skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level	Cognitive skills using intellectual independence to think critically, evaluate existing knowledge and ideas, undertake systematic investigation and reflection on professional theory and practice to develop original knowledge
Technical skills to design, use and evaluate research	Technical skills to design, implement, analyse, theorise and write research that makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge
Specialised technical and creative skills where applicable to the field	Specialised technical and creative skills where applicable to the field
Communication skills to justify theoretical propositions, methodologies and conclusions	Communication on skills to justify theoretical propositions, methodologies and conclusions
Communication skills to present a well ordered dissertation, nonprint thesis or portfolio, for submission to external examination and to disseminate research results to specialist and non-specialist audiences	Communication skills include the ability to present a substantial and well ordered dissertation, non-print thesis or portfolio, for submission to external examination against international standards and to communicate research results to peers and the community
Demonstrate personal autonomy and accountability	Demonstration of "full responsibility and accountability for personal outputs"
The notional duration of student learning for the Masters degree is 1.5 to 2 years	The notional duration for a Doctorate student is 3 to 5 years

Source : Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQF) (2009:15)

2.1.2 The Differences between Research in the Humanities and the Natural Sciences

The differences between the Humanities & Natural Sciences' approaches towards research can be distinguished in two key areas: research paradigms and the respective institutional contexts of research.

Kuhn (2012) argues that there are a number of assumed differences between the research paradigms that inform the natural sciences and the humanities and it has also been argued that these differences also inform each discipline's respective supervision styles (Pole & Sprokkereef, 1997; McNair, 2011). Natural science research primarily takes an indepth question to a small question, and in contrast to this humanties research tends to take a broader, more analytic approach (Fischer, Tobi, & Ronteltap, 2011). Theories that emerge out of the natural sciences tend to have a higher predictive element, whereas the theories that emerge out of humanities research tend to be characterised by a higher descriptive power (Cleland, 2011). Quantitative research tends to be the primary research in the natural sciences (Pole & Sprokkereef, 1997), whereas the qualitative approach tends to dominate in the humanities (McNair, 2011). Again from a paradigmatic perspective, the natural sciences tend to adopt a positivist reductionist approach towards research findings, while the humanities emphase a more holistic approach (Fischer, Tobi, & Ronteltap, 2011).

The institutional context of the research produced by the natural sciences and the humanities also goes some way towards explicating the separation between approaches to research. Currently, research is most commonly arganised along disciplinary lines, with most HE institutions designed along disciplinary lines and within these disciplinary subdivisions, the specialisations of individual researchers follow the paradigms of their preferred discipline (Daly, 2012). Institutional funding in HE contexts tends to favour the paradigmatic approach of the natural sciences (Clark & Llorens, 2012), where the replication of results is deemed to be essential (Pole & Sprokkereef, 1997), whereas in

the humanities it is seen to be impossible to replicate results, especially in the social sciences, which effects both their funding capabilities and their status in HE (Bourgeault, 2012). It can be extrapolated from these differences that the approaches towards the construction of research in the MA supervision are quite different as the natural sciences tend to promote a deductive, empirical orientation to research (Jurkowitz, 2010), whereas the Humanities generally exemplify an inductive approach to research compilation, which it may be argued places more importance upon subjective identity forming aspects and relationship building (Hroar Klempe, 2011). Since this study is focused upon MA supervision in the Humanities, then a suitable theoretical framework that prioritises identity formation and relationships needed to be adopted, fortunately this was found in Activity Theory.

2.2 How Can MA Supervision be Understood? Activity Theory as a Theoretical Framework to Understand the Supervisory Dyad

Although academic supervision has been the subject of research for almost a century, the internal dynamics at play within the relationship itself have not been objectively investigated. Historically, this oversight has been due to the lack of a coherent theoretical framework with which to structure such an investigation. Fortunately for this researcher a framework has recently been developed that provides a map for understanding the relational processes within the supervisory dyad. The name given to this new framework is Activity Theory (AT). Activity Theory was also used in the methodology to structure the data collection methods (see chapter 3).

2.2.1 What is Activity Theory (AT)?

AT is an important aid to understanding deep individual and social transformations, such as that which occurs in postgraduate study. It emerged from a triumvirate of historical epistemologies: Classical German Philosophy (spanning from Kant to Hegel); the discourses of Marx and Engels; and the Soviet Cultural-Historical Psychology of Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria.

There is currently three theoretical generations in the development of activity theory. The first generation, was founded on the psychological theories of Vygotsky, in the Russia of the 1920's and 1930's. Vygotsky and his collaborators A. R. Luria and A. N. Leont'ev introduced a new theoretical concept to transcend the limitations of a psychological landscape dominated by behaviourism and psychoanalysis: the concept of artifact-mediated and object-oriented action (Vygotsky, 1978: 40). They were the first to propose that relationships between human agents and objects found in their environment, are negotiated by three mediating artifacts: cultural means, tools and signs (See figure 2.1)
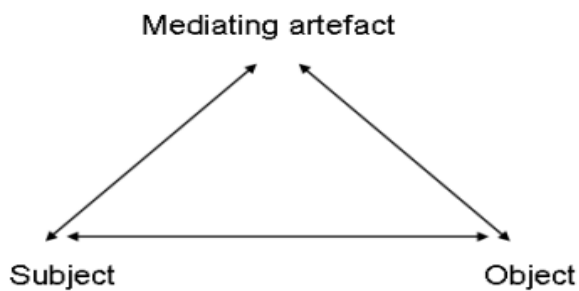
Figure 2.1: The First Generation Mediation Model

Source: Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (2010)

The early pioneers of AT, struggled to theoretically integrate mediation with other human beings and social relations. This problem was solved through Alexei Leont'ev's formulation of the concept of activity, which differentiated between collective activity and individual action. Leont'ev defines 'activity' as those processes "that realise a person's actual life in the objective world by which he is surrounded, his social being in all the richness and variety of its forms"(Leont'ev, 1977: 180). The concept of activity emerged from Leont'ev's reenvisioning of the evolution of the division of labor as a fundamental historical process behind the evolution of mental functions. The theoretical impetus that informed this reconceptualisation was Marx's concept of labour, or production of use values. Work was mediated by tools, but was also "performed in conditions of joint, collective activity [...] Only through a relation with other people does man relate to nature itself, which means that labour appears from the very beginning as a process mediated by tools and at the same time mediated socially" (Leont'ev, 1981: 208).

The second generation of activity theory built upon Leont'ev's work. The crucial difference between an individual action and a collective activity was clarified by Leont'ev in his example of "primeval collective hunt" " (Leont'ev,1981: 210-213). The difference between activity, action and operation informed Leont'ev's three-level model of activity (See figure 2.2). The top level of collective activity is instigated by an object-related motive. The middle level of individual (or group) action is prompted by a conscious goal. And the bottom level of automatic operations is encouraged by the conditions and tools of the action at hand (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, 2010).

Level	Oriented towards	Carried out by
ACTIVITY	OBJECT / MOTIVE	COMMUNITY
ACTION	GOAL	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP
OPERATION	CONDITIONS	ROUTINIZED HUMAN OR MACHINE
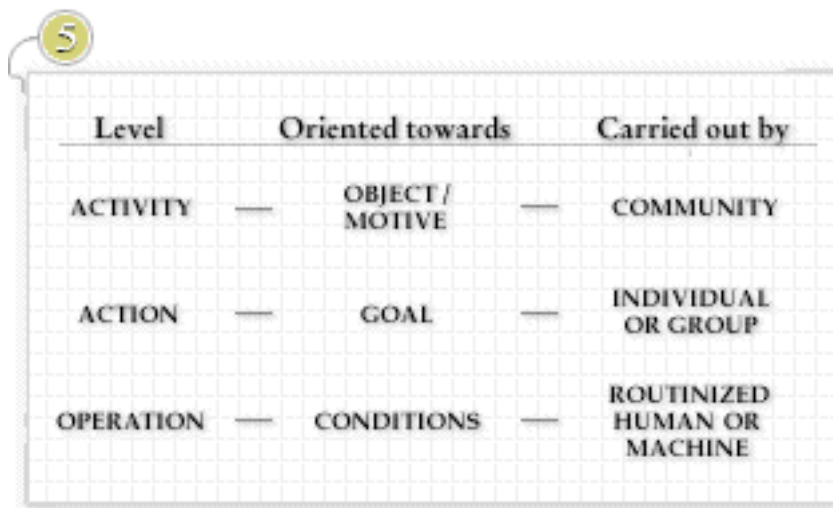
Figure 2.2: Leont'ev's three-level model of activity.

Source: Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (2010)

Unfortunately, Leont'ev never explicated Vygotsky's original model into a diagrammatic model of a collective activity system. This was achieved by Engeström (1987) in his structure of a human activity system (See Figure 2.3).
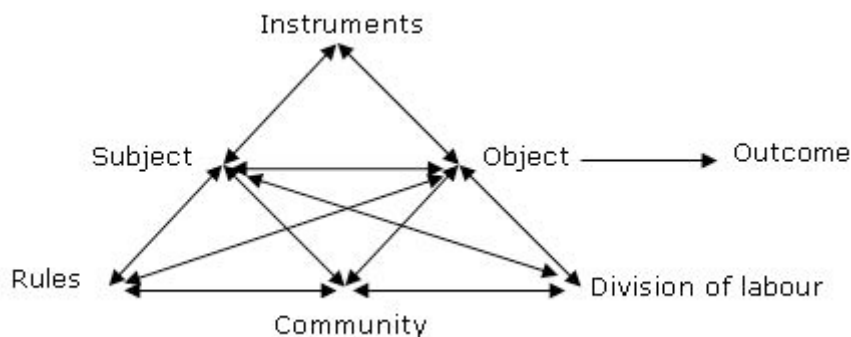
Figure 2.3: Second generation AT structure of a human activity system Engeström (1987:78).

Source: Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (2010)

Beginning in the 1970s, AT has undergone a dramatic evolution and recontextualisation by radical researchers who have applied it to an enormous diversity of areas of activity, including work (Worthen, 2008), education (Beauchamp et al., 2009) and onthology (Peim, 2009). This constitutes the second generation of AT. A key aspect in the development of AT occurred in the Social Science discipline, where Evald Il'enkov's (1977; 1982) interpretation of internal contradictions as the motivating force of change and development in activity systems, began to be recognised as a directive basis for empirical research.

With AT's expansion onto the international stage, some major difficulties began to emerge, especially surrounding questions of diversity and dialogue between different traditions or perspectives. Michael Cole (1988) drew attention to the ingrained insensitivity of the second generation activity theory towards cultural diversity. These challenges are being confronted by the current third generation of activity theory. The third generation of activity theory is attempting to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogue, multiple perspectives and voices, and networks of interacting activity systems (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, 2010). In this approach to research, the fundamental AT model has been evolved to include at the least two interacting activity systems (Figure 2.4).
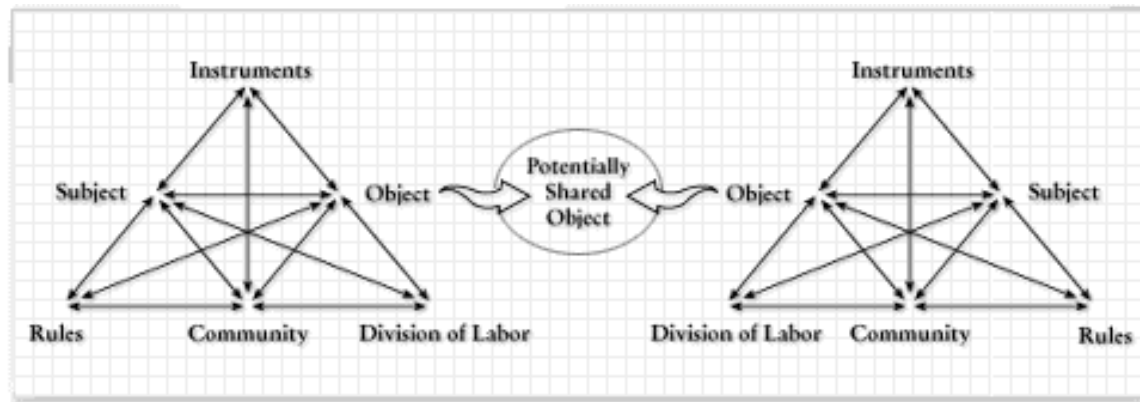
Figure 2.4: Third Generation AT Model

Source: Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (2010)

AT is at this time of writing emerging into its fourth generation. One of the most recent manifestations of AT comes in the form of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) which elaborates on Activity Theory in two theoretically salient ways through the concept of artifact-mediated and object-oriented action (Vygotsky, 1978: 40). CHAT proposes that human activity has a tripartite structure: where the relationship between human agents and objects in the environment are mediated by cultural means, tools and signs. CHAT also highlights the role played by both emotion and identity in the interaction between two separate activity systems, a point that as we shall see is particularly salient for this research.

2.2.2 Activity Theory as a way to understand the MA Supervisory Dyad

Within the MA supervisory dyad, there are two knowledge-producing systems at play, that of the supervior and that of the supervisee. Each system produces knowledge on how to attain the central objective, namely the MA dissertation. However, it may be argued that the motive that underpins each system is different: one is geared towards the attainment of social capital in the form of an academic qualification (Lesko et al., 2008; Collinson, 2005; Otterness, 2006), whereas the other is driven by a desire to establish or maintain a strong research record which is intrinsically linked to job security (Besosa et al., 2009; Cater et al., 2008; Kosnik & Beck, 2008a; Neal, 2008; Vieira, 2008). These two

systems come into conflict with one another through the process of supervision (Achinstein, 2002; 2006b), and is addressed through the process of negotiation (Worthen, 2008), it can therefore be claimed that the knowledge produced in the supervisory dyad is a negotiated knowledge (NK). This dynamic echoes A. N. Leont'ev's (1978) discernment that motive has a major impact on the formulation of an activity system, affecting the way in which consciousness is constructed. As a result, AT can prove to be a key ally in understanding the dynamics at play in the MA supervisor-supervisee relationship. Let us now look at how some of the current literature on postgraduate supervision can be reframed if we focus upon a relational perspective using the AT concept of negotiation.

2.3 Negotiation in MA Supervision

The psychological features of individual consciousness can only be understood through their connection with the social relations in which the individual becomes involved (Leont'ev, 1977: 12)

This section uses the AT concept of negotiation to reframe the relational dynamics within the MA supervisory dyad. To the non-partisan observer, the process of supervision is a holistic, aggregate movement towards a central objective, namely the production of a dissertation. If one acknowledges Leont'ev's insight above, the observer cannot understand the types of knowledge that are being produced without knowing the underlying motives that drive each party. Within the dyad, there is a conflict being played out between the academic dissemination activity system of the supervisor and the academic attainment activity system of the supervisee (Manathunga, 2007). This conflict arises out of incompatable motives that are directed towards a common outcome: the dissertation. The incompatibility of motives can be modified through negotiation (Avruch, 2006; Rose et al., 2006; Pearson, 1998; de Dreu et al., 2006). Negotiation, from an AT perspective, can be defined as the communication between parties with perceived antithetical interests, in order to reach agreement on the allocation of resources, work procedures, the interpretation of facts, opinions or beliefs (Pruitt, 1998). It may be successful or unsuccessful. Negotiation occurs because of problems within social relationships, can involve both individuals and collectives, is influenced by the social or

cultural context in which it occurs, has a historical origin, and evolves over time (Worthen, 2008: 325). Within the supervisory dyad, it has been theorized that negotiation perminates all forms of communication (Meiners & Miller, 2004; Johnson & Strong, 2008).

Within the MA supervisory dyad there is a pedagogic shift away from the traditional educational relationship of competition towards a social relationship of co-operation. This shift is triggered by a move away from the traditional coaching needed for passing examinations (Passmore & Brown, 2009) towards the production and ownership of a body of knowledge (Herther, 2010). This transition from competitive activity to co-operative activity is rarely a smooth one, and it involves a major change in student mindset and in their social relationships with their teachers (Sambunjak et al., 2010; Goldner & Mayselass, 2009). The trials and tribulations associated with this change of activity has been theorized as follows: "activity is bound to encounter man-resisting objects that divert, change and enrich it. In other words, it is external activity that unlocks the circle of internal mental processes that opens up to the objective world" (Leont'ev, 1997: 5). Applying this insight to postgraduate supervision implies a strategic implementation of structured interventions ("man-resisting objects") that enable the supervisee to work with their supervisor and become productive. This may be done through the introduction of certain opportunities for learning and relationship-building which compromise a "circle of internal mental processes" that has the possibility to extend into the wider community. As Roth and Lee demonstrate:

> *Learning occurs whenever a novel practice, artifact, tool or division of labour at the level of the individual or group within an activity system constitutes a new possibility of others, (as resource, form of action to be emulated) leading to an increase in generalized action possibilities and therefore to collective (organizational, societal, cultural) learning (Roth & Lee, 2007: 205).*

Central to this pedagogic shift from competitive to co-operative social relationship is the process of negotiation. Negotiation enables congenial agreements that satisfy both parties's needs, brings together both actors' desires for stability and organization, cultivates social harmony, bolsters self-efficany, minimizes the possibilities for future

conflict and motivates productivity (Rubin, Pruitt & Kin, 1994). If we define MA supervision as a co-operative social relationship, then we come to see that it is knowledge that is being negotiated. This has been termed 'Negotiated Knowledge' (NK) by Worthen (2008) and comes into being when two activity systems come into contact with one another. Worthen emphases the fact that NK is characterised by a perspective or point of view (it is motive orientated), it can be charged with emotion, it can be narrow or broad, and it can be organized so that it is distributed to individuals (each individual knows as much of the whole as they possibly can) or throughout a group (nobody knows the thing in it's entirety, but knowledge is specialized and shared). This is in direct contrast to school learning, which is taught and assessed individually. Extrapolating from Worthen's (2008) work, knowledge within the MA supervisory dyad can be understood as a negotiated knowledge that has a basis in work process knowledge, specifically how to do things, which is usually organized, created and owned by a collective group (those within the discipline or Higher Education Institution).

AT stresses that motivation is central to all types of negotiation in social interactions. In order for negotiators to routinely reach successful outcomes, they need a deep understanding of the task meaning that they must be able to exchange and process information systematically. Research has shown that an ability to do this is dependent upon three factors: Social Motivation; Epistemic Motivation; and Interaction (De Dreu et al., 2006). Social motivation can be defined as the propensity for a distinct distribution between oneself and one's counterpart (McClintock, 1977). Epistemic motivation can be defined as the motivation towards developing and maintaining a nuanced and accurate understanding of the world, including the issue under negotation (Kruglanski, 1989). Interaction refers the social motives that inform the relationship, these can be altruistic, competitive, individualistic and cooperative motives (McClintock, 1977). Numerous pieces of research on social dilemmas, conflict, and negotiation have emphasised a distinction between proself and prosocial motivation (e.g., Beersma & De Dreu, 2002; Carnevale & Lawler, 1986; De Dreu & Van Lange, 1995; Van Lange, 1999; Weingart, Bennett, & Brett, 1993). Proself motivation entails both competitive and purely individualistic goals, whereas prosocial motivation entails both cooperative and purely

altruistic goals. Individuals with a proself motivation aspire to maximize their own outcomes, and they have no (or negative) regard for the desired outcomes of their opposing negotiator. Individuals with a prosocial motive aspire towards a fair distribution that maximizes both own and other's outcomes, and they have a positive regard for the outcomes obtained by their opposing negotiator. Analogously, it may be proposed that the type of motivation that informs the social interaction within the supervisory dyad, has a major effect upon the "emotional colouring" afforded to the experience as proself/prosocial motives may inform either the supervisor or supervisee and positively/negatively affect the levels of cooperation within the relationship (De Dreu et al., 2006).

Negotiated Knowledge (NK) always takes place within a social context and is shaped by the social relationships that people have in that context (Worthen, 2008: 330). How knowledge is negotiated within the MA supervisory dyad has suffered from an unfortunate oversight in the research on postgraduate supervision, but the AT concept of NK's focus upon the areas of perspective, emotional charge, collectivity and breath may go some way to address this oversight and provide an understanding (see table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Aspects of Negotiated Knowledge (NK)

Aspects of Negotiated Knowledge (NK)	
Perspective	How meanings associated with NK are motivated from an individual point of view.
Emotional Charge	The affective resonance that arises out of NK
Collectivity	NK is created and maintained collectively
Breath	NK's collective and distributative nature

2.3.1 Perspective

NK is motive orientated, as it is composed from a certain point of view. This bias comes about through "the movement of meanings in the system of the individual consciousness" (Leont'ev, 1977: 17). Here meanings are organised within a given activity system

towards the attainment of a certain goal or motive. Similarly within postgraduate supervision, information about how research is to be organized, how to behave, present oneself, and engage with research is highly geared towards the production of a thesis (Manathunga, 2005). This idea gains further relevance if we ally it with emerging literature on supervision as pedagogy.

2.3.1.1 Supervision as Pedagogy

The analytic focus on research education and supervision enables another contribution to the understanding of how knowledge is negotiated within postgraduate supervision. Within this body of literature, two main categories have been recognised: studies that examine new ways of theorising about research degrees and literature that centres on what constitutes effective supervision (Engebretson et al., 2008).

In the last number of years, the media coverage of Irish postgraduate education has highlighted the economic and social need for the development of a 'knowledge economy' (Cooke, 2001; Mokyr, 2002; Turner & D'Art, 2008; Grimes & Collins, 2003; Larkin & Thijssen, 2009 (Irish Times)). There has been a seismic shift in the university sector, that has left the traditional knowledge for knowledge's sake attitude mired in the dust, and lead to the conceptualisation of "education and innovation being subject to the same incentives and behavioural responses as other irreversible [economic] investments (Larkin & Thijssen, 2009: 25). This impacts greatly on what constitutes 'good' supervision. 'Good' supervision is no longer seen as a private contractual relationship between supervisor and student that operates outside of a curriculum, but there is a movement underway, that has been pioneered in Australian colleges, to recast supervision in a holistic, relational and flexible mould (Engebretson et al., 2008).

Supervision is the most advanced level of teaching (Connell, 1985). This statement is given further validity by Manathunga (2005), who interviewed supervisors who had attained excellence awards for their supervision and found that they held supervision to be a teaching activity. Branding supervision in such a way, implies a strategy-based motivation for supervisory practice designed towards enabling students to develop the required skill sets, for example, literally showing them how to do a literature review,

write in an academic style, design a research project, write a methodology chapter, and how to undertake data analysis (Englebretson et al., 2008).

There is a marked sense of anxiety among novice researchers associated with asking their supervisor to assist them with the practicalities of constructing literature reviews, writing and undertaking research. This fear is derived from the assumption that their supervisors may think them inept, stupid and incompetent should they ask for assistance in these areas (Manathunga, 2005). This echoes a point made by Reidy and Green (2005) that research candidates desire to be individually instructed or 'coached' in the basic skills related to undertaking research and writing in an academic style. This point given further validity by two more studies by James and Baldwin (1999) and Taylor and Beasley (2005) who both argue that a good supervisor has the ability to counsel students in the conceptualisation and expression of their chosen theoretical framework and show them how this could be related to or build upon existing studies. Haksever and Mainsali (2000) uncovered a direct correlation between research degree attrition and dissatisfaction with the nature of supervision. What they found to be lacking in unsuccessful supervisory relationships was specific guidance on topic definition, research design, data analysis, literature and how to write in an academic style. Spear (2000) ascertained that the presence of these aspects in supervision had a direct correlation to candidates rating supervision as having a satisfactory outcome.

Reidy and Green (2005) describe the process of postgraduate research supervision through the metaphor of 'coaching', where the various stages of supervision evolve in accordance to the needs of the research candidate. The beginning stages were marked by a comprehensive "coaching as setting direction" (Reidy & Green, 2005:55), the objective being the manufacture of a research proposal that would provide a concrete basis upon which future research could be built. The initial 'coaching' pedagogy proposed by Reidy and Green (2005) concludes when the student completes their research proposal. As supervision progresses, the supervisee masters the required skill set and shows capability in independent learning, at this stage the controlling nature of the supervisor relaxes and they may adopt the stage of "coaching as encouragement and affirmation" (Reidy &

Green, 2005:55). This phase is made distinct by clear expectations of what needs to be done, scheduled meetings, regular presentation of work and feedback, and shared long and short-term goal setting (Reidy & Green, 2005). The coaching metaphor used here is an excellent way of illustrating how the pedagogical relationship between supervisor and supervisee evolves in accordance with the candidate's growing sense of confidence and self-sufficiency.

During the concluding phases of Reidy and Green's (2005) 'supervision as coaching' model, the supervisor needs to begin to view the entire thesis from the view of an examiner. Here an emphasis is placed upon the supervisor and supervisee coming together to make sure that the final draft is coherent, well-organised, contains a sustained argument, concise and written in a recognised academic style. A large amount of minute and detailed feedback is required in the last few months of research supervision (Nelson, 1996; James & Baldwin, 1999). However, a note of caution was struck by Nelson (1996) who warns against supervisors becoming too involved in the process, and having too much input into the final draft so that the student's ideas are usurped in favour of those of the supervisor. Yet, it should be highlighted that in order for supervision to be effective, there is an over-riding consensus in the literature that supervision should be seen as essentially a pedagogical or teaching practice.

During the formative period of supervision, the supervisor must make a close appraisal of the needs of the student (Nelson, 1996). This appraisal involves establishing the extent of the student's theoretical knowledge, their conceptualisation of their methodology, their academic writing style, and their technological skill set (James & Baldwin, 1999). A supervisor's micropolitical literacy and networking capabilities play an important role at this stage (Achinstein, 2006b), since this enables a student to be directed towards an appropriate university department or module that may provide a relevant knowledge base. On top of this, supervisors must be suitably qualified to mentor students in their chosen topic and be able to direct them towards a study or reading schedule that will fill in significant gaps in their knowledge or skill set. This may be done through the administration of an early assessment which pinpoints a student's particular skills and

abilities, this allows the supervisor to ascertain where these skills can be best accommodated in the research project (Engebretson et al, 2008).

However, if we examine this literature through the lens of NK, we come to see that the meaning associated with supervisory practice tends to be reduced to the attainment of a particular goal or motive, specifically the students' completion of their research project. It also becomes apparent that the perspective used to frame this argument is primarily that of the supervisors themselves and the HE authorities and that there is a lack of attention paid to the role played by negotiation between supervisor and supervisee, which is most saliently notable by the lack of supervisees' voice in the literature. This becomes abundantly clear when we look at what constitutes effective supervision.

2.3.1.2 The Eleven Characteristics of Effective Supervision

In our current economic, environmental and social climate, the need for effective supervision is no longer just important, it is deemed vital for the construction of new knowledge, practice and ways of being in the world. From a Higher Education perspective, the stress on enabling effective supervision is growing as institutions are being held up to increasing scrutiny, investigation and auditing practices. Universities and Institutes of Technology are now becoming more aware of risk assessment and management that is derived from the threat of public investigation (McWilliams et al, 2002). For a postgraduate thesis to be efficaciously realised in its final form, a conglomeration of factors need to be taken into account, the most salient factor being the quality and suitability of supervision (Moses, 1990; Wright, 1992; Phillips & Pugh, 1994; Whittle, 1994; Nelson, 1996; James & Baldwin, 1999; Connell, 1985; Manathunga, 2005; Reidy & Green, 2005; Lamm, 2004; McWilliam, 2004; Spear, 2000; Heath, 2002; Woodward, 1993; Seagram et al., 1998; Kumar & Stracke, 2006; O'Hanlon, 2004). In order, to reduce attrition rates, increase productivity and completion rates in research programmes, it has been advanced that Higher Education institutions need to revise what they hold to be the characteristics and behaviours associated with effective supervision. Englebretson et al. (2008) have compiled a list of eleven inter-connected characteristics of good supervision, which are outlined in table 2.3 and discussed in detail below:

Table 2.3: The Eleven Characteristics of Effective Supervision (Englebretson et al., 2008).

The Eleven Characteristics of Effective Supervision (Englebretson et al., 2008).	
1) Academic Challenge	Supervision gives proper academic expertise and direction to students in the areas of thesis scholarship and understanding of the supervision process
2) Facilitation and Validation	• Creation of a suitable learning environment • Mutual displays of care and respect • Availability and accessibility of the supervisor • Sensitivity to supervisees' personal issues
3) Supervisory Accountability	Supervisees are informed about the academic requirements associated with supervision and thesis supervision.
4) Frequency and Quality of Meetings	Regular and appropriate contact between supervisor and supervisee
5) Submission of Written Work	Cultivation of adept academic writing skills.
6) Feedback	Punctual and constructive feedback on supervisees' research
7) Being Attentive to Early Warning Signs	Awareness of signs that supervisees are experiencing or could possibly experience difficulties in achieving their academic goals.
8) Enabling Access to a Research Culture	Introducing students to relevant academic and social networks.
9) Boundary Definition	Negotiating the boundaries associated with supervision
10) Collegiality	Equitable rapport between both parties
11) Avoiding De-individualisation and Overgeneralisation	Supervision needs to be negotiated and constructed while taking into account role expectations, the area of study and the personality of the student

2.3.1.3.1 Academic challenge

There is a consensus in the literature on research supervision that supervisory provision should give proper academic expertise and direction to students in both the areas of thesis scholarship and understanding of the supervision process (Spear, 2000; Marsh, 2004).

Lamm's (2004) investigation of this area yielded results that showed that research candidates desired to be academically challenged and to be nurtured intellectually in their supervisory relationship. Ideally, the relationship was seen to be a safe and trusting arena where risk-free intellectual battles could be staged. Honesty in the appraisal of written work and the provision of timely, rigorous and constructive feedback were also factors pinpointed by students as strengthening the supervisory relationship (Lamm, 2004). Yet, although these elements have been stated in the literature, it has been shown elsewhere that the development of these abilities is linked to supervisory training not gained by virtue of experience (Granello et al, 2008; Baker et al., 2002; Vidlak, 2002; Stevens et al., 1997; Worthington, 1987).

2.3.1.3.2 Facilitation and validation

Facilitation and challenge were found to be the most common needs that students gave expression to in terms of their supervision (Lamm, 2004). Facilitation involves a constellation of factors. One of these includes the supervisor's ability to create a learning environment where the candidate could engage in dialogical discourse without feeling that they were the subordinate in the relationship. Care and respect for both the student and their work was required from the supervisor (James & Baldwin, 1999). Availability of the supervisor was another factor in successful supervision. Lamm (2004) established that having a supervisor who was unavailable or inaccessible had detrimental consequences for the emotional well-being of the students and the attached perceptions of their work. Students who were unable to avail of their supervisor's advice and support suffered from a retardation of their academic progress, pro-longed periods of inactivity and confusion, and even a total relinquishment of the research endeavour. It may be argued that a cognate area involves the supervisor being sensitive to the student's navigation of the emotional stages that are associated with undertaking a research degree. While maintaining a sense of professionalism and their covalent boundaries, the supervisor should offer support and encouragement, and to support the student upholding their levels of interest and enthusiasm. Integral to this is the need for supervisors to have insight into the involutions that inform a supervisee's life and how personal incidents may have consequences upon their studies (James & Baldwin, 1999). Unfortunately this

area is somewhat neglected in the literature. Although supervision is ultimately bounded within academia and is somewhat distanced from one's personal existence, there is a growing awareness that a sensitivity to students' personal issues needs to be developed as it has recognisable impact upon any form of academic endeavour. The issue of validation can also be subsumed under facilitation. The most important validation of scholarly work comes from the supervisor. The type of validation informs a student's growing sense of scholarly identity. To paraphrase James and Baldwin (1999: 33), the central factor that informs successful supervision is the supervisor's "concern for the individual learner" (1999: 33).

2.3.1.3.3 Supervisor accountability

Within Australian academic circles, due in part to major governmental educational reform (Bradley et al., 2008; see also Gillard, 2009), supervisors must be seen to be accountable for their actions. This emphasis upon supervisor accountability can also be witnessed in the Irish context, but not to the same degree as in Australia (Delany, 2012). This has lead to an undermining of the traditional idea of supervision as being a private contract between supervisor and student (McWilliam, 2004). Academic knowledge has been re-branded as professional expertise (McWilliam et al., 2002). In this sense, supervisors are required to be experts in their chosen field, yet more importantly, because of the nature of accountability, they must be expert at controlling, monitoring and contributing to the "flow of information" to and about their supervisee (Spear, 2000: 9; McWilliam, 2004: 11). Tantamount to this type of accountable supervision is the strategies that are employed to maneuver the research degree process. Postgraduate students, in the nascent stages of their degree, tend to be ignorant of how to progress through their period of study. A key part of the 'new' accountable supervision is to inform, and if needed help, students with the necessary requirements for thesis preparation and submission, making known and reviewing academic requirements during their course, gaining access to resources for conferences, fieldwork, policy documents, and academic facilities such as library and computers, as well as the set procedures for extensions, suspension, or leave of absence, where to access counselling, career, or study support services, policies on intellectual property rights (Spear, 2000), occupational

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health and safety, and suitable research practices regarding the storing and collecting of research data (James & Baldwin, 1999).

2.3.1.3.4 Frequency and quality of meetings

According to Heath (2002), frequent meetings of at least every two weeks between supervisor and student had a direct correlation with the completion of a thesis and the supervisory experience being rated as satisfactory. Meetings became less episodic towards the midpoint of the relationship, with clusters of meetings in the initial and final stages. A pivotal factor that marked the effectiveness of the supervision revolved around supervisor preparation, the degree of focus of the supervisor, and the supervisor's ability to address and solve pertinent matters. These assertions are mirrored by Spear's (2000:7) findings that stressed that "regular and appropriate contact" between supervisor and their research candidate was vital to effectiveness of the relationship, and that one of the most prevalent criticisms of the supervisory dyad was there being lack of such contact. A strong linkage has been made between frequent supervisor-supervisee meetings and the successful completion of research projects (Woodward, 1993; Seagram et al., 1998). Manathunga (2005) also found a correlation between the amount of clarity surrounding the expectations of the supervisory relationship (from both parties) and research candidates' final satisfaction rating of the research experience. In an adjunct paper derived from this original study, Manathunga (2005) outlines problems that may arise for students that are associated with supervision: insufficient supervision, lack of consistency and trust in the supervisor-student relationship, conflict between supervisors. Another element that can be included in this list comes from Engebretson et al. (2008), the supervisor's discernible disinterest in the student's work. Manathunga's (2005) research on the elements that constitute award-winning supervisors identified regular meetings with students, a constant overview of their progress, and the adaptation of pedagogical and counselling strategies to the distinctive needs of the student as constituting highly effective supervision. Throughout the literature on effective supervision, the point regarding the necessity of regular and quality meeting times was made repeatedly (James & Baldwin, 1999)

2.3.1.3.5 Submission of written work

Early submission of written work by the student early on in the research process has been linked with high satisfaction ratings of supervisor feedback (Heath, 2002). This increase in supervisory effectivity ranking was found to be due to the cultivation of adept academic writing skills through writing tasks and presentations. This oversteps the stressful exercise of 'writing up' that may occur during the final stages of data collection (James & Baldwin, 1999). An early focus on writing skills, enables the student who may have had no previous experience of academic writing skills, to become practiced in the necessary skills needed to compile a good piece of research (Englebretson, 2008). Timely attention to writing during the initial stages of writing allows the supervisor to provide the candidate with accurate advice on both theoretical and practical issues early on in the research process (Nelson, 1996).

Reidy and Green (2005: 57) advanced a sequence of "You write-I read-we meet" when supervising their students. The submitted pieces of writing were held up to a rigorous and detailed feedback procedure by the supervisor and were posted out to the candidate, and a meeting was scheduled to discuss the feedback. According to Reidy (Reidy & Green, 2005), a quintessential supervision session of this type entailed a four step process: the submission of the most recent draft of writing; a discussion of the supervisor's comments upon the annotated draft received in the mail; a dialogue regarding the key concepts contained in the writing and a recommendation of readings that are relevant to the project; and the allocation of short term goals to be achieved before the next meeting. Both Reidy and Green (2005) were unanimous in their assertion that the success of their project was grounded on the regular submission of written work and feedback from the supervisor.

2.3.1.3.6 Feedback that is both punctual and constructive

Feedback is a potent pedagogical tool (Kumar & Stracke, 2006), that "challenges, invites, corrects and provokes students to improve their research and communication" (Engebretson et al., 2008). Feedback that is not constructive or relevant results in students feeling demoralised and undermines their confidence in what they are doing. They feel

humiliated when their supervisor 'forgets' to read their work, or merely skims through it. Spear (2000) found that some of the sources of complaint from students include supervisors being lackadaisical about reading their work, insubstantial comments or a complete lack of feedback, or overtly critical feedback.

The literature on academic supervision states and re-states the need for the supervisor to provide expedient and detailed feedback, to draw attention to the aptitudes in the piece while simultaneously counselling the student on how it may be developed further (Seagram et al., 1998). "What students value in feedback is confirmation of their success... unambiguous identification of problem areas, and suggestions of how to tackle them" (James & Baldwin, 1999: 26). A myriad of studies have reiterated the fact that caustic, acrid criticism that lacks positive input or direction is toxic to students morale and motivation (Powles, 1994; James & Baldwin, 1999; Lamm, 2004).

The cardinal element in efficacious supervision is feedback (Knowles, 1999). In the same study, productive feedback was found to be prompt, in-depth, and critical, and delivered within the context of a professional relationship that was built on mutual trust, support and respect. Knowles (1999) also highlights a possible ethical issue related to supervision, when he argues that morally supervisors should not waste student's time by giving them too little or unconstructive feedback.

2.3.1.3.7 Being attentive to early warning signs

Manathunga's (2005) innovative study on award winning supervisors, shows that highly effective supervisors were acutely attentive to the early warning signs that a student was experiencing or could possibly experience difficulties in attaining their research goals. The initial warning sign was recognised as the student routinely changing the focus of their study, specifically subsequent to the original research proposal being accepted. Further early warning signs include a reluctance to meet with the supervisor, failure to keep prearranged meetings, a lack of communication with other students, non-attendance at research seminars, not answering messages, coupled with a repeated evasion of writing and little or no submission of written work to the supervisor. These findings have been

substantiated by another study, Johnson et al., (2000), where procrastination, self-disparagement, fear of failure, difficulty in decision making, a heightened emphasis and need for structure, and debilitating perfectionism were identified as being premonitory danger signs that the candidate may fail to complete their research degree. An awareness of these factors can be utilised by supervisors to determine those students at risk and to formulate successful strategies for research completion (see Ahern & Manathunga, 2004).

2.3.1.3.8 Enabling access to a research culture

A perennial source of problems for research students is academic and social isolation. The remedy for this is the purposeful construction of dynamic collegial learning communities where novice researchers come to feel that they are part of the greater whole of an academic culture, and where they are given the opportunity to form relationships with other students and scholars who may provide a reservoir of interest, support and enthusiasm (James & Baldwin, 1999). However, the onus is upon the individual supervisors and the course co-ordinators to instigate such events and meetings. Heath (2002) established that a mark of a highly efficacious supervisor is their encouragement of students to become part of a supportive peer group, where reading groups, seminar programmes and networking took place.

A major source of the social capital associated with postgraduate research (O'Hanlon, 2004) comes from the achievement of one or more publications during their research tenure, this was explicitly linked to a higher satisfaction rating when compared to those students who did not achieve publication (Heath, 2002). James and Baldwin (1999) contend that the effective supervisor should enable the student to become accepted into an academic network and to assist them in compiling a number of publications (see also Nelson, 1996).

It has also been claimed that research candidates should develop the capacity to think and reason logically, not simply be conditioned into acting or arguing in a certain way. This is part of the reason why students need to be introduced into relevant academic social networks, where they can practice formulating and defending various arguments. This

atmosphere of investigation, discourse, questioning and examination is seen to be essential for the cultivation of an intellectual life. Such a platform provides candidates with the necessary framework upon which they can structure argument and make informed decisions about the direction of their research (O'Hanlon, 2004: 4). This framework for research social capital can be quite easily implemented through the formation of collaborative groups that may consist of students, or students and supervisors. Such an endeavour may help to instigate an arena for learning that extends beyond the limited tenure of any given postgraduate.

2.3.1.3.9 Boundary Definition

A determinative factor of successful research completion is the quality of the supervisor/student relationship (Scevak et al., 2001). Inevitably, there will be some discrepancy between the expectations of supervisees and their supervisors (Phillips & Pugh, 1994). Primarily, supervisors tend to focus upon a student's intellectual and academic situation, whereas the research candidates themselves them to give priority to the interpersonal facets of the relationship. A dual role is at play here, where students simultaneously look for encouragement and counsel from their supervisor, while at the same time expecting the supervisor to preside over and manage their work (Johnson & Broda, 1996). This finding was mirrored in Spear's (2000) study that showed that students often expected their supervisors to provide a pastoral service to them, namely the allocation of advice, sympathy and encouragement that are theoretically beyond the ambit of academic research. Spear (2000) advocates that sensitivity when dealing with this issue, and that during the inception period of the supervisory relationship both parties need to clearly elucidate their expectations and set boundaries. This entails reaching a consensus on key matters such as how often meetings should take place and what are the objectives behind them, the submission of written work, and issues around publications. Various authors have encouraged the utilisation of checklists, contracts and explicit discussion of expectations in order to enable the terms of the supervisory relationship to be negotiated by both parties involved (Grant & Graham, 1994; Ryan, 1994; Yeatman, 1995; Kehrhahn et al., 1999; Whittle, 1999). This approach is most saliently emphasized in the cognitive behavioural approach to postgraduate completion (Kearns, Gardiner, &

Marshall, 2008; Kearns & Gardiner, 2011). James and Baldwin (1999) have complied a catalogue of expectations that need to be resolved: the type of direction given by the supervisor; the student's independent research; meeting agendas; the submission of drafts; the character and scheduling of the supervisor's response; the supervisor's attitude towards editing student's work; and the open interrogation of any ideological differences between both parties. However, expectations tend to fluctuate and evolve over time, and therefore may need to be re-negotiated occasionally. Yet, a central point in the negotiation process found within postgraduate supervision is the mutual agreement on a timetable for completion (James & Baldwin, 1999).

2.3.1.3.10 Collegiality

Mature doctoral students are often unhappy with the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship (Malfroy, 2005), feel disempowered in this arrangement (Taylor & Dawson, 1997), and look for a more equitable rapport with their supervisors (Malfroy, 2005). The highest satisfaction level among doctoral candidates was scored when the students perceived the relationship to be reciprocative, meaning that there was a mutual broadening of areas of interest, opportunities for publications and the growth of shared interests (Lamm, 2004). Elton and Pope (1989) have argued that collegiality is an important contributing factor in postgraduate students' success. Wisker and Robinson (2006) have advanced the case for the establishment of communities of practice that would include both supervisors and students. A reciprocal relationship between the two actors in this process is of the utmost importance, however, the literature strikes a note of warning: the supervisory dyad is not and should not be a friendship (Boucher & Smyth, 2004; Markie, 1994; Sullivan & Ogloff, 1998). Yet, in relation to mature students, who are employed professionals outside of the academy, this may not apply (Boucher & Smyth, 2004: 348). A common thread throughout the literature is the assertion that the supervisory relationship is a developmental process that is likely to change in focus as the candidate advances. The research journey of the student and its maturation can be delineated from its inception where there is a need and acceptance of methodical advice (Reidy & Green, 2004) to its denouement when the candidate is accepted as a colleague, a competent researcher, and an expert in their discipline (Engbretson et al., 2008).

2.3.1.3.11 Avoiding De-individualising and Overgeneralising

Some authors draw attention to the dangers associated with overgeneralising the postgraduate experience as it de-individualises the individual student and clouds the reality of the situation in a fog of assumptions and dictates. Some investigations (Parsloe, 1993; Phillips & Pugh, 1994) have outlined the miscellaneous stages that postgraduate students transition through, which include excitement, despair, boredom, and confidence. Acker et al. (1994) postulated five classifications of research student 'style': (a) the responsible individualist who needs very little contact with others; (b) highly academic students who are very attracted to research and tend to glean enjoyment out of the process; (c) students who require enormous support and attention from the supervisor; (d) assertive students who dictate their own direction, engage in risk taking and rectify their own problems; (e) candidates who do not seem to be powerless in the face of events and neglectful of their studies. Research students have also been codified in terms of dependence on and independence from their supervisor, and how this affects the supervisory style (Kam, 1997). A fundamental finding in this study was that an appropriate supervision could not be designated according to generalised dictates, but needs to be negotiated and constructed while taking into account role expectations, the area of study and the personality of the student.

The literature on effective supervision tends to present the experience of postgraduate supervision primarily from one viewpoint– that of the postgraduate supervisor. The central argument in this thesis is that postgraduate supervision is a relational phenomenon that involves the negotiation of knowledge between at least two parties. An alternative viewpoint needs to be developed in order to counteract the bias within the existing literature on postgraduate supervision. I argue that a step towards this can be found if we allow ourselves to view postgraduate study as a psychological contract.

2.3.1.3 Postgraduate Study as a Psychological Contract

Any course of postgraduate study demands a commitment from both parties involved. It is a type of relationship. It can be conceptualized as a psychological contract where two parties agree to commit to the production of a piece of knowledge within an allocated period of time. It has been argued by various theorists that effective supervision is a form of mentoring which is a specific type of psychological contract (Pearson, 2001; Pearson & Brew, 2002; Price & Money, 2002; Wisker et al., 2003, Manathunga, 2007).

A psychological contract can be defined as a mental framework that recognizes a reciprocal agreement of give and take between two social actors (Rousseau, 1995). A psychological contract derives from one person assuming that the other person has an obligation towards them. In essence, this is a subjective conjecture that "exist(s) in the eye of the beholder" (Rousseau, 1989: 137). The two social actors do not have to agree with each other about the exact nature of the reciprocal exchange. In fact usually each social actor will often compose very distinctive, quite personal psychological contracts for each other and may not regard the reciprocal nature of the contract in a similar manner (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

A large body of work has been produced on the psychological contracts of employees and the effects this has on organizational behaviour (Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Just as psychological contracts have been shown to be present in the interactions between employees and employers, it has been shown that postgraduate supervisees also develop psychological contracts from their academic supervisors. The fulfillment of which results in a greater satisfaction rating and a higher value placed upon supervisor efficacy (Bordia, 2007; Wade-Benzoni et al., 2006).

A psychological contract is made up of perceptions of exchange and reciprocity in the relationship between a social actor and their social sphere (Rousseau, 1995). Social exchange theory advances the theory that people expect to receive the equivalent of what they give to others (Northcraft & Neale, 1994). Therefore, social actors who are willing

to work for the benefit of an organization would expect an analogous amount of that industry back in return, usually in the form of desirable rewards (*inducements*; Rousseau, 1995) from the relevant organization.

As outlined in the organizational psychology literature, psychological contracts in places of work take root as a result of actual and implied commitments made to the employee by agents of the organization (managers, HR personnel, work supervisors). This is especially true during the employee recruitment and socialization process (Rousseau, 2001). Evidence from studies on project collaboration within educational contexts, illustrates that students who show that they are motivated by the amount of effort they put in to succeed in a given task also presume that their advisors will provide assistance in planning projects, invest sufficient time and effort into supervision, and provide core resources for the project (Shellito et al., 2001).

Breach of psychological contract ensues when individuals feel that the organization that they have invested their time and energy in has failed to meet its obligations (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The resultant offended sensibilities breeds resentment in the individual, leading to organizational relationships being perceived as being unfair, untrustworthy, unequal and being characterized by duplicity and dishonest behaviour (Rousseau, 1989). Serious consequences also arise out of breaches in organizational behaviour, such as reduced job satisfaction and performance, and increased turnover (Restubog & Bordia, 2006; Restubog et al., 2006; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007).

Zhao et al's (2007) recent overview of the existing research on psychological contracts proposes that breach affects individuals on an emotional level, which in turn impacts upon their work attitudes and behaviors (Zhao et al., 2007). Breach of a psychological contract is essentially a subjective appraisal of a relationship that arises out of two key types of situations. The first situation entails an actual breach of the contract (*reneging);* this is where explicit promises made to the individual are not fulfilled. The second situation is occasioned by a perceived breach (*incongruence*), where things that an

individual conjectured to be part of the relationship fail to be actualized. However, it is very difficult to differentiate between the two situations on an individual basis (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Essentially the academic argument about whether a breach of psychological contract is real or conjectured is not relevant to real life situations, such as MA supervision, as both situations tend to have the same consequences. In reality, a threat of breach can do much to undermine the amount of trust invested in a relationship.

Analogously, MA students are often unaware of the extent of their supervisor's role in the Higher Education institution. They may not know how many contract hours are given to supervision, what projects the supervisor is engaged in or their lecturing workload. Blind spots such as these can result in a mistaken conception of what role a faculty member should play (incongruence), resulting in the formation of impractical psychological contracts that are preordained to be breached. Coupled with this, academic supervisors may purposely or inadvertently breach clearly defined elements of psychological contracts (reneging). Stemming from either situation, MA students in an academic supervision setting may experience a breach of psychological contract and perceive the supervisor as not having met all the expected requirements, for example in the scheduling of meetings, the length and breadth of discussions, aiding with the planning and execution of the dissertation project, and supplying the necessary writing and research skills. This in turn colours the students' experience of research as being stressful and anxiety provoking (Bordia et al, 2010).

Motivation, which is intrinsically linked to the expending of effort, commitment and performance, is another victim of breach of psychological contract. Faltering or non-existent motivation has been associated with attrition, a failure to complete the course of study, enrollment in alternate components for degree completion, switching topics, changing supervisors and negative recommendations to prospective students. From a Higher Education point of view, the breach of student psychological contract points to the absence of proper training for faculty and a misalignment of organizational strategy (Manathunga, 2009). It also taints the experience of engaging in further education. Students' psychological well-being and satisfaction should serve as key outcomes for

Fourth Level Education. This is further recognized if we observe the emotional charge that arises out of the NK in MA supervision.

2.3.2 Emotional Charge

NK carries an emotional charge (Worthen, 2008) or an "emotional colouring" (Leont'ev, 1977: 18). In just the same way as social relationships carry emotional charges, the knowledge produced through these interactions also carries affective resonances. The emotional charge of postgraduate supervision is revealed in both negative and positive ways. The negative experiences occur when familiar ideas about knowledge and learning, identities, and social networks are breached and when students' reading, perceptions, and identities are questioned (Lesko et al., 2008). A factor that may go some way towards explaining this phenomenon is the fact that supervisors and supervisees often find themselves in contexts where there can be a large power differential based upon status or experience (Achinstein, 2002). The positive experiences seem to occur when supervision occurs within a mentoring context and there are collaborative attempts to overcome difficulties in practice and learning (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). Examples of this include active dialogue, creating a balance between autonomy and collaboration, reflective learning, learning from each other's 'lifeworld', and the establishing of trust and respect in the relationship (Herman & Mandell, 2004). As we shall see in the following sections, the emotional charge associated with the NK in MA supervision has parallels with the literature on academic professionalism and psychological boundaries.

2.3.2.1 The Professionalisation of Academic Supervision

In an analysis of the evolution of the Master's degree in American Education, an ASHE Higher Education report (2005: 5) notes that *"the Master's degree is evolving as an entrepreneurial credential with the potential to alter the direction of graduate education in the liberal arts and sciences as well as in the professions"*. This can be read as emblematic of the current re-envisioning of what direction knowledge production should take in HE, specifically one that is "more responsive to the marketplace than to traditional academic environments" (2005: 5). The ideology of professionalism is a

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motivating factor behind this, however, the definition of a professional by virtue of their position in a hierarchy of prestige, income, power, the possession of the means of production or the quantity of ascribed skill, prestige and education no longer stands (ASHE, 2005; MacFarlane, 2010).

The concept of the professionalisation of academic supervision is drawn from general theories of organisational sociology, but has been applied to the Higher Education context by Menand (2009) who maps its effects on American universities. According to Menand:

> *The most important function of the [Higher Education] system is not the production of knowledge. It is the reproduction of the system. To put it another way, the most important function of the system is the production of the producers (2009: 28).*

This discussion contains the following claims:
- Academic professionalisation creates specific teaching styles, which in turn cultivates particular habits of mind among students.
- Academic professionalisation means that the production of new knowledge is regulated by measuring it against existing scholarship rather than it meeting interests external to the field.
- Academic professionalism creates a hierarchical divide between experts (knowledge authorities) and those who attempt to develop said knowledge.
- Academic professionalisation leads to the creation of established procedures and codes of conduct for academic supervision.

2.3.2.2 Professional Responsibility in Higher Education

A different perspective on academic professionalism emerges from Salbrekke and Karseth's (2006) analysis of professional responsibility in Higher Education. Discussion of professional responsibility draws extensively and often directly from Brint's (1994; 2002) broader analysis of educational and work orientations. In the work of Brint (2002), professionalism is particularly evidenced in the area of education by the rise of a

"utilitarian ethos" among students, with a correlating ethos on the part of the educators as evidenced by their movement from the classical values of "social trustee professionalism" to "expert professionalism" (Brint, 1994). This he argues has led to increased mass education and a stronger market orientation within HE institutes, which in turn has resulted in a new academic culture driven by economic imperatives and a more competitive mentality (Brint, 1994; Bleiklie et al., 2000; Larson, 2002).

Correspondingly, in her analysis of Australian Higher Education, McWilliam (2004) points to one particular effect of professionalism on the meaning and quality of academics' work: the creation of an academic audit culture. Within an academic audit culture, the academic becomes a self-managing worker who attempts to minimise risk through a constant auditing of their own and other's behaviour by working to turn themselves into "professional experts". This, she claims, has lead to the production of a new subjectivity within the university, where knowledge workers are constantly on guard against "risk events" that Kasperson et al. (1988: 151) claim trigger "additional organisational response and protective actions or impeding needing protective action".

Building on the insights drawn from McWilliam's work, there are two aspects of risk and knowledge production that are specifically relevant to Higher Education and MA supervision. First, there is the failure of organisations founded upon professional knowledge to address the personal and emotional components within educational relationships, which may create a "system that works better, but is trusted less" (Alaszenski and Brown, 2007: 1). A 'trust deficit' is said to operate in these organisations and this is primarily linked to where knowledge is thought to come from. The ways in which knowledge is framed is influenced by "considerations of whether professionals might be trusted… [which] typically concern belief about the adequacy of a knowledge base or its application" (Barbalet, 2006: 8).

The second insight drawn from McWilliam's work concerns professional development within academia, being one of the "standard models for measuring organisational performance" and is an audit mechanism "designed to ensure organisational precision for

coping with (appropriate) social imprecision" (2004: 155). This is based on logic of procedural equity in academic business, designed to create a certain standard of disciplinary knowledge. Professional development is increasingly characterised by a focus on improving the organisational work of academics, with courses on leadership skills and research marketing, and a lessening focus on actual disciplinary knowledge. This is especially evident in the role played by feedback. Feedback is often communicated through a number of evaluation instruments, such as student feedback forms, and its value is not in question in an educational institution (Harvey & Williams, 2010). However, feedback also plays a role in regimes of self-management, where external demands are internalised, and intensive bureaucratic self-monitoring becomes seen as something natural and voluntary (McWilliam, 2004). Within the literature on academic supervision, it is repeatedly recommended that feedback and monitoring increase supervisor's effectivity (Englebretson et al., 2008; Manathunga, 2005), with an especial onus upon supervisor accountability in the creation and management of supervisory relationships (Spear, 2000).

In academia, the archetype of professionalism has evolved towards being 'broadly understood as the transmission of specific competencies that match job market requirements" (Dahan, 2007: 335). One supervisor in Dahan's study eloquently expressed one of the contradictions that lie at the heart of academic professionalisation:

> *This word, professionalization, has always made us upset, my colleagues and myself. First, when I teach, I feel as if I am professionalizing my students. Second, we all know what they mean by professionalization: to push our students to go and look where they will never find a job! We haven't seen many start-ups in literature… (2007: 344).*

A related contradiction can be found in what constitutes academic practice. MacFarlane's (2010: 1) research on the changing nature of academic practice suggests that what is understood to be an academic identity in undergoing a re-evaluation or an "unbundling" as "as a result of a variety of forces including the massification of national systems, the application of technology in teaching and increasing specialisation of academic roles to support a more centralised and performative culture". Of relevance to this research was

the finding that that academic work is increasingly being subdivided into specialist functions (Kinser, 2002) and that traditional academics who embrace the tripartite role of teaching, research and service activities are being replaced by "para-academic" staff: staff who specialise in just one aspect of academic practice (MacFarlane, 2010). This has been described as a "silent revolution" in academia (Finkelstein & Schister, 2001).

MacFarlane (2010) claims that the boundaries between 'academic' and 'professional support staff' are becoming increasingly less distinct, while simultaneously becoming more fluid, resulting in the formation of nascent communities of practice. The term "Third Space" (Bhabha, 1991) has been used to describe the new vistas opened up by these "unbounded" and "blended" professionals found in Higher Education. Blended professionals are people who are employed in roles that transverse both professional and academic domains, whereas unbounded professionals utilise institution-wide projects and development opportunities to blur the distinctions between academic work, administration and management (Whitchurch, 2008). The "Third Space" opened up by this evolution in what constitutes academic professional identity can be witnessed in the changing nature of research activity, which is becoming increasingly defined in restrictive performative and quality audit-driven terms (MacFarlane, 2010).

From this brief review of the literature, there are two additional claims about academic professionalism that may be added to Menard's (2009) earlier list. These are:

- Academic professionalism is voluntarily supported by and misrecognised as an economic imperative.
- Academic professionalism creates and reinforces an audit culture within Higher Education, especially through an emphasis upon professional development

While there are merits associated with academic professionalism, it may also be contended that this orientation can also serve to neuter the emotional charge associated with the social interactions that make up postgraduate supervisory relationships. One way

that this may be done is through the erection of psychological boundaries, the subject of the next section.

2.3.2.3 Psychological Boundaries

Recently, in the social psychological literature on performance management and problem solving (Bohni et al, 2008; Höge, 2009; Miller et al., 2010), attention has given to the role played by psychological boundaries. If we frame MA supervision as a relational phenomenon, then the theories relating to psychological boundaries in social relationships serve to illustrate the emotional resonances that inform the perspectives of both supervisors and supervisees.

It is only within the last number of years that attention has been given to psychological boundaries and as a result research on the concept is not as yet the preserve of one particular discipline. Specific theories related to psychological boundaries are social identity theory (Jaspal & Yampolsky, 2011), self-categorization theory (Reid, Palomares, Anderson, & Bondad-Brown, 2009), social cognitive theory (Chisholm-Burns & Spivey, 2010), and systems theory ('Stell' Kefalas, 2011). Boundaries outline the remit or extent of something, the limit of a subject, object or activity. Specifically, the boundaries found within MA supervision appear to define the limits of the self, relationships and academic activity. It has been postulated that such limits are the result of social consensus, rather than individual decision (Bernstein, 1971).

In the sphere of education, the concepts associated with boundaries and learning identities are gaining increased currency (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). The focus upon boundaries has been primarily brought about by the socio-cultural turn in educational research (see Bernstein, 1971; Engeström, Engeström, & Kärkkäinen, 1995; Star, 1989; Suchman, 1994). A boundary can be defined as "a socio-cultural difference leading to discontinuity in action or interaction" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011: 133). Traditionally boundaries have been understood in an educational context representing divisions between two interactional sites. This mindset is radically altered if one takes a socio-cultural perspective, where boundaries are also seen to be representative of a continuity in

action or interaction despite there being sociocultural differences. Two concepts have been revolutionary in reframing boundaries as possible forms of continuity across sites: boundary crossing and boundary objects. Boundary crossing commonly alludes to a social actor's transitions and interactions across different sites (Suchman, 1994). The boundary crossing concept was first coined so as to provide a description of how professionals in the course of their employment may need to "enter onto territory in which we are unfamiliar and, to some significant extent therefore unqualified" (Suchman, 1994: 25) and "face the challenge of negotiating and combining ingredients from different contexts to achieve hybrid situations" (Engeström et al., 1995: 319). Whereas Boundary objects can be defined as "entities that enhance the capacity of an idea, theory or practice to translate across culturally defined boundaries", for example an MA dissertation (Fox, 2011: 70).

Psychological boundaries (sometimes termed personal boundaries) regulate the behavior and emotion in the processes of interaction. A social actor's behavior and emotional response is dependant upon individual personality, cognitive ability, values, and beliefs, coupled with other related characteristics. Individual psychological boundaries enable people to mediate and process information received from the outside world, which allows them to filter information, emotion and to interpret the behaviour of others. These psychological boundaries are often described as the zone of comfort (Jinshan & Mingjie, 2004). Within an organizational context, psychological boundaries imply an acceptance of social norms specific to that organization. However, psychological boundaries are subject to certain restrictive factors such as individual cognitive style, self-efficacy, attitudes, beliefs, organizational objectives and group norms (Kaplan, 2012). For the purposes of this chapter, I define psychological boundaries as being a type of identity formation that emerges out of an implicit understanding of a situation.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, there is noteworthy relationship between the type of cognition applied to objectives and performance. Cognition refers to the mental processes associated with thought, which include attention, remembering, producing and understanding language, solving problems, and making decisions. Cognition is the

primary way in which organisms process information about their environment. Both the content and the process of cognition seem to exert an influence on psychological boundaries (Kaplan, 2012).

What is emerging here is that cognition, or the way one thinks about a situation, influences the emotional and behavioural reactions towards objects, people and events (Burger, 2004). If we relate these insights to MA supervision, we can recognize that a supervisor's or supervisee's cognition psychologically structures the relationship through emotional and behavioural reactions towards the dissertation itself and the Other in the supervisory dyad. In this sense, it may be proposed that MA supervision can best be understood as a living "in-between" space.

2.3.2.4 Supervision as a Living In-between Space
By allying AT's idea of the emotional charge of NK with Heidegger's (1962) and Watsuji's (1962) insights on the symbolic construction of space, we can categorise MA supervision as being a living "in-between" cultural space where identities are altered, negotiated, and occasionally transformed. Heidegger's (1962) philosophical "Existential Analytic" holds that people are spatial beings as a result of their "being-in-the-world." There is no need to expound at length what the Heideggerian view of being-in-the- world is, however it is possible to use his view of space to come to a relational understanding of the space that exists 'in-between' the two parties in MA supervision. Heidegger's postulations, when married with Watsuji's (1962) studies on the inter-relationship that exists between humans and space, gives credence to the argument that space should not primarily be understood as an impersonal, quantitatively measured area, instead spatiality has an existential quality that is rooted in human experience and the various ways in which we emotionally respond to it (see Ortega, 2004). If we ally ourselves with Heidegger's claim that space is dependent on human beings, we come to conceive of the space created by the supervisory encounter as being redirected away from the physical meeting place (usually the supervisor's office) towards a space that is intuitively and existentially created.

Watsuji's (1962) writings provide an alternative perspective on MA supervisory space. Although he concurred with many of Heidegger's claims, he chose to argue that Heidegger overlooked the core emotional intimacy that lies at the heart of existence. In accordance with Watsuji's claim, I hold that the intimate nature of the supervisory encounter is overlooked. This assertion is not mere conjecture, but as we shall see is supported by the findings in Chapter 5. In his classic work, *A Climate, a Philosophical Study* (1962)*,* Watsuji dialogues with Heidegger's (1962: 375) assumption about time being the primary existential structure, and goes on to argue that space should be given a corresponding importance. He claims that we are fundamentally linked to space, but what matters is the "climate" of the space in which we find ourselves.

> *Climate is seen to be the factor by which self-active human being can be made objective. Climactic phenomena show man how to discover himself as "standing outside" (i.e. existere) ... The essential character of the tool lies in its being "for a purpose" ... Now this purpose-relation derives from human life and at its basis we find the climatic limitations of human life. Shoes may be for walking, but the great majority of mankind could walk without them; it is rather cold and heat that makes shoes necessary. Clothes are to be worn, yet they are worn above all as a protection against cold. Thus this purpose-relation finds its final origin in climatic self-comprehension (1961: 13).*

What matters is not the location of the space, or the ability to use a space as a tool or a piece of equipment, but, in Watsuji's theorizing, it is the degree to which the climate enables the purpose of the space that matters; where aims and necessities that are made possible through the use of tools or equipment have the scope to be realized. If we apply this to the supervisory relationship, it may be argued that it cannot exist independently of the space and climate constructed by both the supervisor and supervisee, nor can the object of the relationship be summarily categorized as the production of an academic piece of writing. Dialoguing with Heidegger's and Watsuji's ideas of space, guides us towards seeing the MA supervisory relationship as arising out of an interdependence of social actors and space, where those involved can choose to develop an intellectual space that is geared towards knowledge production and distribution or create a space and climate that enables self-discovery and the re-imagining of identity. Yet, as we shall see,

how this space is collectively created and negotiated has a marked impact upon how the knowledge created is used and understood.

2.3.3 Collectivity

NK "is both created and held collectively" (Worthen, 2008: 332). It is a social and a political knowledge that is not manufactured or owned by a single individual. AT sees actions as collective and organized by a common motive, thus providing us with an understanding as to how a piece of knowledge (for example a diagram) can be diffused among many persons in a group, yet still maintain a single purpose. Applying Worthen's insights to the supervisory dyad, it may be advanced that the NK created in this context is created through dialogue, the ideas that are transmitted from each party are not the sole preserve of the individual (otherwise how could they be communicated?), but come from a collectivity of sources, but within the dialogue between supervisee and supervisor the ideas are further refined and employed towards the common motives of knowledge production and relationship building. This implies the creation of a dialogical Third Space, which is key to understanding MA supervision as a relational phenomenon.

2.3.3.1 Supervision as a Third Space

The concept of Third Space is a useful conceptual tool that enables us to re-evaluate the type of NK that collectively evolves between the two parties within the MA supervisory dyad. Third Spaces are associated with interactions that involve a shared objective (usually knowledge based) between social actors who would not ordinarily have contact with one another (Gutierrez et al., 1995; Toumi-Grohn, Engstrom, & Young, 2003; McAlpine & Hopwood, 2009). In Higher Education, the general mode of interaction tends to be through the lecture format, small groupwork, tutorials, lab work and online interfaces, whereas in postgraduate work the mode of interaction tends to be one to one and therefore it may be claimed that a new interactional space is created between the supervisor and the supervisee; a supervisory Third Space. In these Supervisory Third spaces, each actor may be driven by disparate motivations, but work together because they hold a shared opinion as to the value or importance of the object (specifically the

dissertation) at hand (McAlpine & Hopwood, 2009). These new educational constellations, driven by a joint goal or objective share, enable both parties to create new learning possibilities beyond the constraints of the established channels, which generally structure interactions in Higher Educational contexts.

The Third Space as it pertains to MA supervision does not exclusively belong to either the supervisor or the supervisee's domain, instead it can be found in the shared space where both domains overlap. Third Spaces are found in "in between spaces" that abide in the "overlap and displacement of domains of difference" (Bhabha, 1994: 2). Ideas of difference, which are understood to be divisive binary oppositions, are repudiated in a preference of the "both/and also" negotiations that constitute a hybrid space (Soja, 1996). This hybrid space allows incomplete comprehensions, held by each of the separate parties to undergo a notional shift that transgresses established boundaries. Because Third Space permits scope for negotiation and openness, oppositional thinking is bypassed in favour of a creative combining and restructuring of ideas (Soja, 1996).

Third Space recognises what is socially produced through discursive and social interactions (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje et al., 2004). Therefore, Third Spaces are sites for collaboration as well as innovation (Bhabha, 1994; McAlpine & Hopwood, 2009) and are very relevant to my argument for reframing MA supervision as a relational phenomenon as well as to the evolving pedagogy of postgraduate supervision (Cuenca et al., 2011). In point of fact, Gutiérrez (2008) referring to similar educational contexts, advances the notion of the 'collective third space', an arena where both joint and individual sense making takes place. Bearing in mind these theoretical perspectives, some scholars have drawn attention to the pedagogical implications of Third Space. Of significance for this study is the description of Third Space as a location where social actors negotiate, bridge, and navigate obstacles associated with difference, such as bypassing the personal/academic identity divide by linking discourses of lived life with those of academic disciplines (Moje et al., 2004). If viewed in this way, Third Spaces in MA supervision can be understood as a shared space between supervisor and supervisee

that can be utilized to construct and mediate rich revisionings of the possibilities associated with engaging with research.

Bhabha has not ignored the political ramifications of Third Space, as he draws attention to the possible power differentials that may occur when two cultures inhabit one space. This aspect is dealt with through the introduction of the concept of "cultural difference," which "focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation" (Bhabha, 1994: 50). When one culture and its conceptual framework dominates a space where the holder of a less powerful framework is also located, that person needs to moderate his or her identity in order to be accepted into the more powerful conceptual system (Elmborg, 2011).

Klein (1996: 2) goes on to argue that engaging in research activities can be politically defined as a type of boundary crossing, because "the interactions and reorganisations that boundary crossing creates are central to the production and organization of knowledge". Correspondingly, postgraduate supervisees are usually in possession of the less powerful conceptual framework and through resistance, accommodation, appropriation, or other negotiation strategies attempt to define an academic identity for themselves within this Third Space (Achinstein, 2005). For Bhabha, this "act of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space" (Bhabha, 1994:53). It may be argued that it is the meaning associated with the supervisory encounter itself and the resultant production of specialist knowledge that embodies the Supervisory Third Space in the Masters Degree.

Second Space is defined as pertaining to conceptual systems, structures, and rules, which are definitely communicated and stringently regulated. An example of this can be seen in the various pedagogical strategies developed for increasing postgraduate students effectivity (Borders, 1989; Drennan & Clarke, 2009; Ho, 2003). In contrast to this, the contact between social actors that constitutes Third Space tends to be unclear and open to

interpretation because "[a]s parties from different cultures come into contact with one another in Third Space, they advance novel symbolic systems and new ways of understanding and experiencing space into the established and consistent domains of Second Space" (Elmborg, 2011: 344). Bhabha cautions us to "remember that it is the 'inter' the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of a culture. . . . And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994: 56). Accordingly, Third Space can be seen as a space that makes possible transformative and meaningful contact between cultures and social actors and enables people to change and alter their identities and how they come to view others.

Principally, Third Space theory was established to address the cultural and political climate associated with the evolving nature of late capitalism which gave rise to postmodernism, postcolonialism, and ongoing global inequality (Elmborg, 2011). I argue that Third Space provides a concept whereby the dyadic interaction that occurs in MA supervision can be re-conceptualized through the lens of culture. The space that is created between the supervisor and supervisee has yet to be fully co-opted into a coherent theoretical framework. If we acknowledge that both parties bring with them social and cultural elements that inform how they perceive the relationship, then we can come to a fuller understanding of how both participants' negotiate and find meaning through engaging with the process of doing research as well as the other in the supervisory relationship. This is elucidated further when we look at the relevant ideas contained in the research mentoring literature.

2.3.3.2 MA Supervision as Research Mentoring
As previously stated, this research focuses on the relational aspects of MA supervision, and it is primarily in the literature on research mentoring that new understandings of interpersonal dynamics in HE are being developed. Research mentoring is best understood if looked at through a developmental relational framework, as this includes the multiple forms of mentee, such as undergraduates, graduates, postgraduates, as well as taking into account various complications such as cross-cultural mentoring, class and

gender issues (Kaslow, McCarthy, Rogers, & Summerville, 1992; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Brown et al, 2008). This section will briefly outline the argument that postgraduate supervisory relationships mirror certain research mentoring behaviours and follow a developmental process over their duration.

In recent times, a new framework for supervision has emerged from research into the development of an alternative supervisory model for speech-language pathologists, which has its roots in a mental health perspective (Geller & Foley, 2009). This is an alternative and highly relevant development as it posits a relational and reflective model of supervision that is adaptable to various disciplines such as education and the social sciences. The traditional model of supervision is characterized by a "one-person psychology" (Geller & Foley, 2009: 23), where the supervisor is active and didactic while the supervisee is passive, responsive, lacking initiative and predominantly following the supervisor's dictates (McCrea & Brasseur, 2003). In contrast to the purely cognitive model, this relational and reflective model advances the argument that both the cognitive and affective elements of the supervisory dyad need to be given due attention for successful or effective supervision to take place, but without depreciating the requirement for discipline-specific knowledge (Geller & Foley, 2009).

Within this relational and reflective model there is an emphasis placed upon "ports of entry" (Stern, 1995). Ports of entry can be understood as the "potential entry points" for supervisors and their supervisees into an understanding of their relevant discipline (Geller & Foley, 2009). Across disciplines and various approaches, there exist various strategies or ports of entry that characterize either the working or academic relationship (Bruschweiler-Stern & Stern, 1989; Sameroff, 2004; Stern, 2004). Examples include the attainment of key proficiencies or skills through various disciplinary contexts such as in the classroom, laboratory, placements, athletic coaching and one-to-one supervision or mentoring.

At this point a key differentiation needs to be made between ports of entry and 'teachable moments' (Rich, 2009). Three major themes characterize teachable moments: (1)

professional discourse about skills, techniques, research and special cases; (2) authentic experience or practical experience; and (3) skill development or skill instruction (Rich, 2009). The teachable moment hypothesis is firmly located in the cognitive domain, with an overarching focus on skill development. The ports of entry hypothesis proposes that both the cognitive and affective domains be given due recognition in postgraduate relationships. Within the literature, there are two main 'ports of entry' used by supervisors throughout various disciplines. The customary port of entry for supervisors can be framed as *working from the outside in*. The objective behind this is to change or modify manifest systems of behaviour, knowledge or skills of the research candidate. This is the cognitive component. In contraposition to this, a number of supervisors assert that effective supervision entails *working from the inside out*. The goal here is to understand the hidden, internal processes and emotional states of the supervisee. This constitutes the affective component (Rich, 2009). However, recognizing the affective component in academic relationships raises further issues if we apply it to MA supervision, especially, as we shall come to see in a later section, in the areas of risk and trust (McWilliams, 2005).

The proposition, afforded by Geller and Foley's (2009) model, that both the cognitive and affective domains operate and are present in academic supervision diverges greatly from the traditional apprentice model of supervision, which tends to disavow the role played by emotion. Yet, within the literature on mentoring, acknowledgement of these two elements has long been present. The mentoring relationship has been theorized as prioritising the interpersonal relationship and how tasks are processed as opposed to giving undue importance to the achievement of an end goal (Brown et al., 2008). Contemporary conceptualizations of mentoring see it as being a developmental process that must be made fit the needs of both parties involved, thus placing emphasis upon the negotiation of the relationship between two social actors and the constant renegotiation of this social contract as both persons grow and evolve together (Anzai & Langlotz, 2006). These are very applicable to the argument for understanding MA supervision from a relational perspective and are discussed below.

2.3.3.3 The Developmental Approach to Mentoring

I have argued that MA supervision can be understood as a type of research mentoring. It has been shown that how participants relate to one another in the mentoring relationship is directed by the past experience of both persons in the dyad (McCrea & Brasseur, 2003). Applying this to the MA supervisory relationship, it may be argued that just as the type of relationship a medical doctor would have towards a patient, would be different to their relationship to a colleague, so the supervisor's relationship with a supervisee is dictated by the amount of prior research experience the supervisee has had. In this sense, a developmental emphasis is vital in order to understand the nuances of the mentoring relationship and has a direct correlation to effective supervision.

> *Effective [research] mentoring must be tailored to the appropriate developmental needs of the mentee. For example, when engaging with an undergraduate student, the role of a mentor may take the form of an advisor or supervisor, whereas a similar mentoring relationship with a junior faculty member may more closely approximate that of a confidant. It is not uncommon for research mentors, particularly those with large research programs, to have mentees who are at uniquely different levels of training and experience (e.g., graduate students vs. postdoctoral fellows). Thus, the astute mentor is aware of these important developmental differences and consequently applies an appropriate developmental approach when mentoring (Brown et al, 2008: 306-307).*

Elaborating on the above quote, research mentoring is seen as a constantly evolving developmental process whose objective is to allow students and research mentors/supervisors to become dynamic innovative actors, who are suitably qualified to appropriate important leadership roles in their chosen fields (Lee, Anzai & Langlotz, 2006: 556-561).

As mentioned in the previous section, research on the developmental aspects of postgraduate supervision has proposed that mentoring behaviours that build upon mental health constructs are core to a effective supervisory relationship (Geller, 2001; Geller & Foley, 2009). This new supervisory perspective, which has its origins in clinical supervision, is termed the "Relational and Reflective Model" (Geller & Foley, 2009). This also mirrors the prevalent developmental stages that are found across various disciplines such as mental health, psychology, speech-language pathology,

psychotherapy, nursing and education (Brasseur, 1989; Heffron, Ivins & Weston, 2005; Stoltenberg, McNeill & Delworth, 1998; Weider, Drachman & DeLeo, 1992).

Table 2.4: Geller and Foley's (2009) Three Stages of Supervisee Development Applied to an MA Context.

Developmental Stage	Level of Supervisee	Characteristics
Initial Stage	Entry Level	Introduced to a practical field after a fundamental grounding in a theoretical component related to a chosen discipline
Middle Stage	Intermediate Level	Completed several practical assignments and has a clear view of their completion of a Masters degree.
Final Stage	Final Level	Achieved a Masters degree and may be involved in professional practice or commencing further postgraduate training

Geller and Foley (2009: 24-25) have outlined three interlinked stages of supervisee development that can be readily applied to our context of MA supervision (see table 2.4 above). The initial stage is the entry-level supervisee, who is usually being introduced to a practical field after a fundamental grounding in a theoretical component related to a chosen discipline. The middle stage deals with the intermediate-level supervisee, who is typified as having completed several practical assignments and has a clear view of their completion of a Masters degree. The final level is the advanced-level supervisee who is distinguished as having achieved a Masters degree and may be involved in professional practice or commencing further postgraduate training. Each stage is characterised by changes, alterations in assumptions, personal belief systems and supervisee behaviour. For adult learners, the transition from one developmental level to another is inherently connected with cognitive and emotional exertion, conflict and stress as they are purposively involved in the adaptation, assimilation, accommodation, and revision of new literature, data and theories. Effective supervisors have a working knowledge of the

subtle dynamics associated with the developmental stages and the accordant fluctuations in attitude and perspective (see also Manathunga, 2005). This research holds that an investigation of these dynamics could be used to evolve a more superlative supervisory practice where learning contexts would be in correspondence with the supervisee's developmental level.

The three developmental stages forwarded by Geller and Foley (2009) are seen to be fluid, as no fixed division exists between or within these stages. However, within any developmental structure certain concerns must be duly noted. Distinctive differences and variations between supervisees have been linked to age, previous knowledge, experiences, cultural beliefs, ability to process information (Geller & Foley, 2009), as well as perceptions, scholarly identity, self, geography and community (Lesko et al, 2008). A supervisee's characteristic tendencies towards understanding and applying certain concepts and materials may arrest or assist their movement from lower to higher levels of development. These stages of development echo the Carnegie Foundation scholars, Sullivan and Rosin's (2008) argument for HE in *A New Agenda: Shaping a Life of the Mind for Practice.* In their study, they argue that "practical reasoning" needs to replace "critical thinking" as the focal point for Higher Education. Practical reasoning integrates three educational habits – of mind, head and heart. These habits entail thinking and acting responsibly with integrity, civility and caring, elements that reiterate both the developmental outcomes for the supervisee and the objectives of professional development for supervisors associated with postgraduate supervision (Bovill, et al., 2010).

Geller and Foley's (2009) developmental model is similar to Anderson's (1988) continuum model which is predicated on the assumption that the amount and type of supervision varies over time with the simultaneous evolution of the roles played by the supervisor and the supervisee. Three broad stages of supervision are also outlined in this model: (a) an evaluation-feedback stage; (b) a transitional stage; and (c) an independent, self-supervision stage. This framework asserts that the supervision is an animated, fluid and perpetually evolving process that is guided by the level of the supervisee.

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This approach gains an additional dimension when compared with the traditional cognitive apprenticeship position forwarded by Collins, Duguid and Brown (1989: 39). They claim that "[s]ituations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity. Learning and cognition, it is now possible to argue, are fundamentally situated". The idea that knowledge is co-produced through activity has obvious parallels with the AT perspective that acts as a sensitizing framework for this research (Blumer, 1954). However, it may be argued that the developmental models of research mentoring and postgraduate supervision discussed above diverge from the cognitive apprenticeship model in an essential aspect. Specifically, in their proposition that the learning and cognition, that occurs in supervisory contexts, are fundamentally relational. The main hypothesis behind these developmental models is that supervisors customise their behaviour to the distinctive level of the supervisee. Nevertheless, the majority of writing in this area emphases that supervisors *fail to* alter their approaches and behaviours in order to match the supervisee's experience, knowledge, and developmental stage (McCrea & Brasseur, 2003; Lesko et al., 2008). In actual fact, it has been revealed that there are often glaring contradictions between what supervisors claim to do in supervision and what they do in reality (Geller, 2001).

Anderson's (1988) frame of reference parallels that of Geller and Foley (2009) in that it places emphasis on (a) developmental change and growth in the supervisee, (b) the bidirectional relationship between supervisor and supervisee, and (c) dynamic and reciprocal concepts. A central difference between the two frameworks is found in the latter's focus on integrating mental health constructs into the supervisory method. This advances the assertion that both parties in the dyad should begin to recognize that the influential unseen undercurrents that steer the course of human relationships are also present in postgraduate supervision (Elstrup, 2009; Wiener, 2007; Rigas, 2008), which entails developing an awareness of the relational effect of each individual's personal narrative and their subjective perceptions (Christensen et al., 2009; Hostetler, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2009). In the psychological discipline, these themes have been reiterated for decades, most saliently in the seminal work of Ward and Webster (1965), but as of yet

these themes have not yet been applied to academic supervision. There is a strong link between mentoring and the development of expertise in any given discipline, which is a particularly salient issue for MA supervision.

2.3.3.4 Expertise, Mentoring and the 'Contact Zone'
The aim of this section is to briefly outline a key issue that arises out of the relationship between expertise and mentoring in postgraduate supervision.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, there has been much attention paid to how expertise is linked to the domain of simultaneous interpreting (Hoffman, 1992), developmental progression (Sawyer, 2004), and the role played by communicative competence (Kearns, Kleinert, Kleinhart, & Towles-Reeves, 2006), all of which are of relevance to the argument for a relational focus upon MA supervision. However, a coherent definition of what expertise is in educational mentoring contexts, remains nebulous. For example, Hattie and Clinton (2008) found the following in the course of their investigation into Second Level induction programmes for beginning teachers: expertise was usually not defined in the context of teaching; inductees are not allowed to critically analyse or even adapt existing models of teacher expertise; nor are they told that they may become experts themselves one day. This, they argue, points to the invisiblity of expertise in educational mentoring contexts.

Although there may be some validity in Hattie and Clinton's (2008) claims, others take issue with the idea that expertise can only be conceptualised and recognised in practice. Hagger and MacIntyre (2006) advance that because expertise is so dependant upon context and the individual, it can only be fully comprehended in relation to a particular practice and cannot be quantifiably defined in a general sense. They claim that an educator's expertise can only be authenticated through a critical investigation of their practice and cognitive processes. Recognition of the practices, knowledge and understandings that make an educator an expert, they argue, can only be actualised through a coherent mentoring process.

Further issues emerge if we look at how expert practice is portrayed in the research mentoring literature. In the literature, expert practice tends to be associated with professional development (Dahan, 2007; MacFarlane, 2010; Menand, 2009). According to Achinstein and Athanases (2006) most research mentors in HE have a restricted access to professional development and are not overtly familiar with the standard ideas about educational development and learning. In fact, in research circles, they found that there was a predisposition towards a "reductive" style of mentoring that uses quick fix methods and stop gap solutions often in the form of workshops or resources. They go on to argue that there is an urgent need for those who are involved in research mentoring of any form to be provided with opportunities to become well versed in mentoring and educational development, otherwise mentoring for expertise may become a rare commodity, with educational mentoring practices reduced to the enculturation of students and their educators in order for them to simply go on reproducing the status quo (Britton, 2003).

Commitment also plays an important role when mentoring and developing expertise. Ireson (2008:44) uses Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Romer's (1993) term *deliberate practice* to define this type of commitment. Her use of the concept of deliberate practice tries to move beyond the limitations of critically analysing expert practice by highlighting the need for educational mentors to set goals to advance their own learning and the learning of their students. Applying this insight to MA supervision, it may be asserted that for MA supervisees to develop expertise in their given field, their supervisor needs to prearrange considered, goal-orientated learning for both themselves and their supervisee (Manathunga, 2007). Commitment to this process rests with both parties involved, but also the ability of the supervisor as mentor to communicate to the supervisee what is expert and professional practice (Scaffidi & Berman, 2011). However, it must also be recognized that there may be political ramifications associated with these conceptualizations of research mentoring and expertise, especially when applied to postgraduate supervision. These issues are further clarified when we view the MA supervisory relationship as an intercultural contact zone between the expert culture of the supervisor and the personal culture of the supervisee.

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Mirroring Bhabha's (1994) anxieties over the possible political implication of Third Space is the post-colonial construct of the 'contact zone'. This has been applied to postgraduate supervision by Manathunga (2011). The concept of the' contact zone' was originally formulated by Mary Louise Pratt (1992), and was associated with the cultural space of contact between different cultures during the process of colonisation (Manathunga, 2011). Pratt (1992: 4) categorises the contact zone as being "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination". Contrary to the common assumption that colonial contact zones are spaces of exploitation, Pratt instead stresses the role played by transculturation in colonial relations.

> *Transculturation is a term used to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant . . . culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own and what they use it for (Pratt, 1992: 6).*

In her writings, she advances the notion that transculturation has a deep affect on the identities and cultures of people who exist in both the colonial periphery and their municipalities. This transcultural colonisation may be understood "not in terms of separateness or apartheid but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" (Pratt, 1992:7).

Theories about the contact zone have been applied to general Higher Education and postgraduate supervision contexts by Manathunga (2009). She does on to argue that postgraduate research may be effectively reframed as an intercultural contact zone as it approximates the degree of boundary crossing that characterises the contemporary research culture (see also Reh, Rabenstein, & Fritzsche, 2011; Postlethwaite, 2007; Mitchell, Hayes & Mills, 2010) and because it equips participants with the theoretical tools that allow them to map not only the innovative potentials afforded by pushing the limits of what constitutes contemporary knowledge, but also the symbolic violence, exploitation and assimilation that may be experienced in the 'research game' (see also Lucas, 2006). Those who are involved in the research process are now finding that their

work transverses the nebulous boundaries that separate disciplines, universities, industries, professions and other workplaces in order to meet the challenges presented by Twenty-First Century society (Manathunga, 2009:169). The ability of research to transverse boundaries also raises some important issues regarding the collective and distributive nature of postgraduate research, these issues will be discussed in the next section.

2.3.4 Breath

NK is characterized by breath, which occurs as a result of it's collective and distributive nature, but also due to the reality that it comes about through the existence of problems or contradictions, and the effort to produce solutions (Worthen, 2008). This idea is mirrored in Fischer's (2002: 131) re-evaluation of the concept of "experience", which attempts to clarify how the direct experience of work or practice produces new theoretical challenges that serve to produce work process knowledge that has a theoretical basis. The production of theoretically motivated work process knowledge mirrors the production of NK. However, if we closely examine the effects that arise out of the collective and distributative nature of NK in HE and postgraduate supervision, we witness an interesting dynamic coming to the fore: a risk adverse mentality.

2.3.4.1 Risk and Postgraduate Research

As discussed in a previous section, academic professionalism can operate as a defense against the risk of failure or litigation. However, this risk-adverse mentality is also prevalent on an organizational level. In this section, I will outline the organizational and relational factors that inform the rationalities of risk in HE and MA supervision.

Beck (1992) argues that organisations in a 'risk society' need to be vigilant for signs of potential danger, namely the danger of performing in ways that are morally, politically, and economically acceptable. Risk society is characterised by a negative logic, a change from the management and distribution of material 'goods' to the management and distribution of 'bads'. An example of this would be the management of knowledge related to danger, about risk assessment and about the back-up systems required to

protect against such a reality. In the context of Higher Education institutions, this implies policing against the danger of waste (of resources), of failure (of students), and of declining standards (intellectual, ethical and moral) (McWilliams, 2004: 152).

The emphasis upon academic professionalism can be read as a natural by-product of the rationalities of risk that are prevalent in academia (McWilliam, 2004). It has been argued by Tierney (2001) that these rationalities of risk within academic institutions have had a major effect upon academic freedom and organisational identity. The contemporary organisation, including universities and other Higher Education institutions, is a risk organisation. The reason for this is that all organisations in late-modernity are fated to protect themselves against the possibility of failure (McWilliam, 2004: 152) by "politicising and moralising the links between dangers and approved behaviours" (Pidgeon et al., 1992: 113). Let us now investigate how risk is manifested in the literature on HE organisations.

2.3.4.2 Fourth Level Education as a Risk Averse Organisation

Fourth level education is being increasingly characterized as a risk adverse organization, meaning that they mandate that risks be minimized even at the expense of losing the value or benefit that may accrue from the activity (Klinke & Renn, 2002). It has been claimed that the growth of non-traditional students at postgraduate level embodies a risk for Fourth Level Institutions in that they represent alternative modes of knowledge and call the maintenance academic standards into question (Malfroy, 2005: Engebretson, 2008). However, it is overtly simplistic to label non-traditional students as the main reason for the increased awareness of risk in HE and its careful management (McWilliam, 2004: 153). A major breakthrough on the social and political origins of risk can be found in the work of Ulrich Beck, especially his book *Risk Society* (1992). Beck draws attention to the fact that the distribution of risk (technological, economic, social, ecological) produced through modernisation has become a major obsession of current governments and societies. As such, this study provides additional insight into the distribution of risk by explicating the inequitable allocation of power in global and national societies.

This has also been shown to be the case in HE, Kasperson et al. (1998) argue that a "social amplification of risk" has occurred in academia, where an emphasis on expertise and professionalism acts as a precaution against the dangers of non-traditional ways of knowing that threaten academic standards. Building upon the assumption that the study of risk is simultaneously "a scientific activity and an expression of culture" (1998: 149), Kasperson et al. elucidate how minor risks may result in huge public reactions. In order to describe this phenomenon, they have coined the term 'risk events' in order to describe "occurrences that are manifestations of the risk and that initiate signals pertaining to the risk" (1998: 150). A risk event is primarily "specific to a particular time and location", but comes to interact with psychological, social and cultural processes" in ways that "heighten or attenuate public perceptions of risk and risk behaviour" (1998: 150).

Ahern and Manathunga (2004) were among the first to realise that academic study and its related success or failure is heavily dependant upon both the cognitive (thinking), conative (doing) *and affective* (feeling) domains, with the latter aspect being severely neglected in supervisory practice. Major problems were found to congregate around the affective domain, which can be further broken up into emotional and social factors. Performance anxiety, low self-esteem, and personality clashes between supervisors and students constitute the emotional factors, with the social factors being characterised by social relationships/circumstances and academic/social integration (2004: 242). These can be linked to the culture of risk cultivated the 'hidden curriculum' of postgraduate research. Studies have shown that postgraduate study is predominantly thought of by students as being a test of intelligence (Lorge, 1945; Vryonides & Vitsilakis, 2008; Dijksterhuis et al., 2009; Giles et al., 2009; McManus et al., 2003; Zhou, 2003), if this is the case the psychological ramifications are immense. Parsloe (1993) discovered that women especially who engage in Higher Educational research do so "in an attempt to convince themselves that they are actually intellectually competent" (1993: 51). This illustrates that the culture of risk in academia can be linked to faulty perceptions about what constitutes postgraduate study. A technique suggested by Ahern and Manathunga (2004) for dealing with this issue is 'reframing'. This involves getting students to see the

postgraduate experience as a progression with a series of stages to be completed rather than being the ultimate test of intelligence poisoned with the toxicity of risk to self, professional identity and ability, an approach very similar to Geller and Foley's (2009) model of supervisee development.

2.3.4.3 The Induction of Novice Researchers as a Risk Event

The induction of novice researchers can be afforded the status of risk events if and when the social relationship comes in contact with sociocultural processes that are perceived as 'dangerous', this results in demands for an "additional organisational response and protective actions or impeding needing protective actions" (Kasperson et al., 1998: 151). This is an example of the doubleness of the play of risk (McWilliam, 2004: 153), where the reaction to risk does not curtail the actual risk itself, but instead amplifies the actions and reactions needed for its management. This assertion is not meant to be read as a criticism of postgraduate supervision, instead it serves to emphasize that this relationship is guided by the "precautionary principle" (Pellizzoni & Ylonen, 2008), which comes from institutional perceptions of and responses to uncertainty and the wide ranging ethical responsibility of Higher Education research (Strydom, 1999; Jonas, 1979). Yet, this emphasis upon precaution is based upon the assumption that societies institutionalise the most relevant forms of action (Meyer, 2006). This institutionalisation results in the creation of comparatively constant, reciprocal expectations between individuals, groups, and organisations especially when it comes to paragons of action (academic professionalism) or social relationship (MA supervision) (Parsons, 1954; O'Dea, 1963).

An important missing element is that seems to be noticeable by its absence in the preponderance of the literature related to postgraduate supervision is trust. Experts, through their drawing upon the theories of others and by virtue of the fact that the majority of experts represent key institutions, symbolise principle-agent relationships, that is agents who act "on behalf of another even though there are differences of interest and inequalities of information between them" (Barbalet, 2006: 7). This agent relationship can be read as a response to uncertainty (Alaszewski & Brown, 2007), and is most saliently obvious when one looks at the various theoretical specialisations

forwarded by those in academic and professional circles. Such an agent relationship is beneficial to the expert in that it lessens the "potentially high costs associated with the actual process of decision making and those associated with making the wrong decisions (i.e. anxiety costs)" (McGuire et al, 1998: 186). Yet, this relationship will not work successfully without trust or to borrow an existential term 'good faith' in the communicator of knowledge (Alaszewski & Brown, 2007: 3). This element of trust can be characterised as the "confident expectations about another's motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk" (Boon & Holmes, 1991: 194) and is "the means whereby an uncertain future is given the semblance of certainty" (Barbalet, 2006: 7).

The investigation of the role played by trust in postgraduate supervisory relationships is still in its infancy, yet the existing literature reveals some noteworthy insights relevant to this research (Barnett, Youngstrom, & Smook, 2001; McCloughen, O'Brien, & Jackson, 2009; Goldner & Mayseless, 2009). This will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.4.4 Trust as an Overlooked Element in Postgraduate Supervision
The notion of trust acts as a challenge to the culture of risk that is prevalent in Fourth Level Education. Trust mediates the interaction between the two parties in supervision, but also the interaction between the individual and the institution. Throughout the supervision literature, there has been a marked blindness towards the significant role trust plays on individual, interpersonal and institutional levels, which is all the more astounding given the amount of focus given to supervisory technique (Knowles, 1999; Malfroy, 2005; Malfoy & Webb, 2000) and effective supervision (Manathunga, 2005). I will now examine how trust has been conceptualized in various contexts relevant to MA supervision.

Calnan and Rowe (2006) draw attention to the personal and emotional ways in which trust operates in the interaction between individuals and health professionals, but it is also of relevance for the interactions between novices and experts:

> *Trust has been characterised as a multilayered concept primarily consisting of a cognitive element (grounded on rational and instrumental judgments) and an affective dimension (grounded on relationships and affective bonds generated*

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> *through interaction, empathy and identification with others) (Calnan & Rowe, 2006: 3).*

The feeling or emotional elements within postgraduate supervision is quite often ignored or overlooked completely. A recent article by Lesko et al (2008) has done much to attempt to mend this breach in knowledge. The writers examined the sensationalised stories that the students told about the curriculum of a doctoral course as it was composed by interactions between students and instructors within distinct contexts. These stories were read as "markers of disruptions that occurred in ideas of knowledge, learning, identities, and social networks" (Lesko et al, 2008: 1543). The study illustrates various social and psychological dynamics that come into play when familiar categories, beliefs, and norms are breached. The doctoral course's emphasis on contingency and conflicting perspectives resulted in feelings of ambivalence about research, peers, instructors, and the self. From this we can extrapolate that exposure to new types of knowledge has a profound effect on the most intimate personal level, effecting personal identity and sense of self, and may have a major impact upon future educational and intellectual development.

However, attention must also be given to the disparate power relationship that exists, but is rarely acknowledged, in all trust configurations. If one subjects the notion of trust to a post-structural analysis, it is no longer viewed as a commodity to be bought and sold, but it is a discursive process that is associated with knowledge/power. A major theorist in this area, although he did not explore trust explicitly, is Michel Foucault (1977; 1972), whose theoretical writings examine the role of power in modern society. Foucault contends that power and knowledge are interrelated and consequently every human relationship is conflictual and involves a negotiation of power (Foucault, 2002; Weaver et al, 2006). He postulates that discourse is a medium for power, which manufactures speaking subjects (Strega, 2005; Motion and Leitch, 2007). Trust is associated with power and accordingly propagated through discourse (Bourne, 2009). Foucault advances the argument that discursive rules are forms of expert knowledge. Discursive rules operate in postgraduate research in key ways: the allocation of a research genre, the organization of supervision meetings, the choice of seminar, writing and supervision styles, the setting of

examinations and assessments, and most importantly, the role of feedback (Englebretson et al., 2008). Discursive rules are inextricably bound to the execution of power as the effect of discursive practices is to structure thought into certain frameworks, thus making it effectually impossible to think or communicate rationally without using them; not to use them would cause one to be branded as 'irrational' or 'mad' (Hook, 2001).

Holtzhausen (2000) proposes that the most forceful discourses are those who try to predicate themselves on the natural, the sincere, the scientific and rationale. An example of this is the scientific method championed by the 'hard' sciences such as Chemistry and the Biomedical field. Trust in this sense can be understood as a strategy of power utilized by certain elites in our society, through which they reproduce their knowledge systems and guarantee their endurance through a 'masquerade of expertise' (Holtzhausen, 2000; Bourne, 2009).

The concept of trust is broad in its definition. It includes both cognitive and affective elements, and can expand to encompass interpersonal and institutional systems (Rawlins, 2007). However, lying beneath the surface is something that is integral to the trust relationship, namely a power imbalance. The power imbalance at the heart of the trust relationship is highly relevant to MA supervision, but it must be realized that this power dynamic does not necessarily have to remain fixed, but can be subject to negotiation. Negotiation can serve two masters, depending on how it is utilized, it can challenge expert knowledge systems or it can strengthen the already solid buttresses of expert culture. This research will investigate how negotiation operates within a specific postgraduate research context – the MA supervisory relationship.

2.4 Conclusion

AT will serve as a theoretical framework for this research for data collection and analysis. The rationale behind doing this is that within the typical supervisory session, two knowledge producing activity systems are at play, that of the supervisor and of the supervisee. Each activity system produces knowledge that may be used within an

academic context, however each is informed by separate motives. When the activity systems of supervisor and supervisee come in contact with one another, especially in written or spoken communication, certain tensions may arise. These tensions come about through both parties' actions being informed by separate motives. These tensions are rectified through the process of negotiation, and the resulting knowledge produced can be deemed negotiated knowledge (NK). As a result, both the semi-structured interview questions and the Activity Theory Log were built around the following themes, derived from Engeström's (1987:78) structure of a human activity system: Subject, Object, Mediating Tools (resources, concepts materials), Rules (explicit/implicit), Community, The Division of Labour.

To summarise, there has been much research into the interpersonal dynamics at play in academic supervision (Barnett, Youngstrom & Smook, 2001; McCloughen, O'Brien & Jackson, 2009; Goldner & Mayselass, 2009). However, these studies have tended not to focus upon MA supervision, despite the fact that the MA is the introduction to postgraduate study and Fourth Level education, and positive MA experiences have been correlated with both academic and training success (Rich, 2009). Within the literature there has been an almost over whelming focus on the cognitive elements inherent in the supervisory dyad, (Morin & Ashton, 2004; Opipari-Arrigan, Stark & Drotar, 2005; Rosenthal & Black, 2006) all the time ignoring the fact that the cognitive and affective domains are intrinsically linked when it comes to any type of interpersonal interaction (Geller & Foley, 2009) and adult education (McCrea & Brasseur, 2003; Lesko et al., 2008). This has lead to limited insights into the field of postgraduate supervision.

This chapter has argued that there is an overlooked relational element associated with MA supervision. This was done using the AT concept of NK to frame this argument. This argument is at variance with the cognitive bias that informs the majority of postgraduate supervision literature. This deep rooted cognitive bias has traditionally lead to effective supervision being painted as a didactic one-way transmission of knowledge (Mylopouos & Regehr, 2009; Youn et al., 2010; Fadde, 2009; Hargreaves & Hopper, 2006; Burri, 2008). Unfortunately this 'Master-Novice' conceptualization of supervision is still

prevalent, yet there is a growing move towards integrating the emotional perspective into supervisory practice (Geller & Foley, 2009; Anderson, 1988; Geller, 2001). Expertise, and its attached ideology, is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of supervision, and still remains to be critically analysed. The quantitative evidence to date has further corroborated the link between expertise and supervision, the supervisor being in the 'expert' role, however, there is a simple explanation for the weight of this evidence, specifically the almost complete reliance upon interviews with supervisors, without supporting interviews with their supervisees (Christensen et al., 2009; Hostetler, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2009). There has been little attention given to the relational dynamics at play in the supervisory dyad, between the supervisor and supervisee, and how this effects the production of knowledge and each parties personal and professional growth and development. There has been little research evidence, which explores how supervisors and supervisees frame supervision and each other's understanding of roles, boundaries and tasks. Further, little research attention has focused on mentoring relationships in MA supervisions, with the exception of outlining research expectations (Brown et al., 2008).

In this thesis, I attempt to address these methodological gaps by designing an observational and interview-based study, which attempts to map the relational dynamics at play between the supervisor and supervisee in the academic supervisory relationship. I will focus on various personal, political and organizational factors that influence supervisor and supervisee behaviours and attitudes and work with a more complex understanding of supervision as a developmental pedagogy. A number of influential studies have investigated supervision as a developmental process (Lee, Anzai & Langlotz, 2006; Brasseur, 1989; Heffron, Ivins & Weston, 2005; Stoltenberg, McNeill & Delworth, 1998; Weider, Drachman & DeLeo, 1992; Geller & Foley, 2009), a pedagogical approach (Engebretson et al., 2008; O'Connell, 1985; Manathunga, 2005; Robson & Turner, 2007; Ihmeodeh et al., 2008; Fortunato & Mincy, 2003; Schuck, 1981), a micropolitical process (Achinstein, 2002, 2004, 2006b) and as a site of ambiguity (Lesko et al., 2008), these provide a foundation for my study and will be elaborated upon in the Methodology section. However, based on the findings from the

literature, some questions regarding the relational dynamics of MA supervision have not yet been answered, these questions will be outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY:

Identity, Methods and Limitations

Chapter Outline	
METHODOLOGY: Identity, Methods and Limitations	
Research Questions and Hypothesis	Identity as a Function of Activity
Research Design:	• AT-influenced Methodology • Research Questions derived from CHAT • Participants • Measures • Obtaining Access to Participants • Plain Language Statement (PLS) • Consent Forms
Data Collection Procedures	• Individual Semi-structured Interviews • Activity Theory (AT) Logs
Methodological Procedures	• Harmonising the Central Elements of AT with Participants' Activity Systems • Using language that is readily accessible to participants • Rationale Behind Interview Questions • Using language that is readily accessible to participants • Rationale behind the questions in the Student AT Log • Rationale behind the questions in the Supervisor AT Log • Pilot Testing
Data Analysis	Grounded Theory
Limitations of the Study	• Access to the Field • Time • Students Chosen by Supervisors • Gender • Disciplines under review • Time-Lines
Ethical Considerations	• Identity Transgressions • The Research Space • Role Conflict

3.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the criteria used to develop the methodology and to describe the various data collection procedures that will be used to answer the research question posed by this study: What are the relational dynamics in MA supervision? This chapter also explains the rationale behind using certain data analysis processes and the possible limitations associated with this study.

3.1 Research Questions and Hypothesis

The reliance upon a traditional dualistic research framework, which cleaves apart and segregates social structures from human agency and individual behaviour, does not allow for objective understanding or the enabling of new ways of acting on the world (Beauchamp, Jazvac-Martek, & McAlpine, 2009). This is especially true, when one speaks of the supervision of MA students. Consistently throughout the literature on postgraduate experience, there exists a gap in understanding as to how the various contexts in which MA supervisors and supervisees find themselves inform their academic identities. Achieving an MA qualification entails a developmental progression towards a clear, quantifiable goal, but in order to do this both parties must participate and navigate through complex and multifarious contexts (Sweitzer, 2009).

Some examples of these contexts include interactions with fellow students, lecturers, and supervisors, attending seminars and conferences, the academic organisation, family and social relationships that exist outside the remit of education. Initiating, maintaining, sustaining and balancing a pleasant degree of mutuality within these contexts can involve contestation and the corrosion of relationships (Lesko et al., 2008). In order to chart the topography of both MA supervisors and supervisees' experiences, a methodology and theoretical grounding that facilitates an understanding of the relational dynamics that inform such a context must be adopted. Such a grounding was found in Activity Theory (AT). The subsequent theoretical framework justifies the design of the research protocol (and the pilot study) for investigating the relational dynamics that inform MA supervision and the accompanying formation of academic identity.

3.1.1 Identity as a Function of Activity

Identity development can be envisaged as a function of a person's engagement within social locations, which incorporate the cultural values and histories of these locations (Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Activity Theory, in the main, replicates the structural aspects of activity systems, however the theory has recently evolved to accommodate emotional, motivational, and identity-related aspects of human activity (Roth, 2007). If one applies this to the MA candidate's progression towards the completion of their degrees, they are not solely operating in the context of an academic programme of study, but are simultaneously engaged in the negotiation of an academic identity. By partaking in a given academic culture, they become confederates by affiliation to the culture of a discipline, a department, an intellectual community, a Centre for Higher Education and an aggregate of Higher Educational Institutions. In doing this they engineer their engagement, contribution and sense of self within these cultures (Beauchamp et al., 2009). Accordingly, it may be argued that an individuals academic identity influences academic work and is also modified by it (McAlpine & Hopwood, 2006).

As mentioned previously in the literature review, there is currently a burgeoning literature that emphases relationship-based learning (Geller & Foley, 2009), that lays an important emphasis upon the axiality of relationships for all educational learning. Relationships can be conceptualised as having two aspects: (a) the interactive and external aspect, which is constituted by patterns of action within multiple contexts, and (b) the intersubjective and internal aspect, which can be defined as the intentions, feelings, and meaning making between social actors (Fivaz-Depeursinge et al., 2004: 126). Yet, despite this binarism being present in any interaction, the contextual basis for any interaction can be multifaceted and the constellation of contexts can exert an enormous influence upon the interaction. This is especially the case in the relationship between the MA supervisor and supervisee, since the development of relationships is at the heart of what both researchers and postgraduate supervisors do (Shahmoon-Shanok et al., 2005).

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This idea was popularised by Lave and Wenger (1998) through their concept of situated learning, which - if applied to the practice of MA supervision - implies that the interactions that occur between MA supervisors and supervisees are mediated through interactions with larger groups in the department, the college or the outside world. This means that participants in MA supervision are actively involved in negotiating and navigating through a heterogeneous ocean of departmental, disciplinary and institutional contexts (McAlpine & Hopwood, 2006). Thus it may be asserted that the experience of MA supervision is rooted in a relational matrix, which affects the growth, nature, and direction of the supervisory relationship.

3.2 Research Design: Activity Theory Applied to the MA Supervisory Dyad

In order to cogently understand the intricacies of the relational matrix of the MA supervisory dyad it is necessary to use AT (Engestrom, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999) to investigate the conflicts, tensions, and dynamics that are inherent in the identity-producing process that is MA supervision. AT has been heretofore used to understand the complex roles and relationships in education: teacher's professional development (Smagorinsky et al., 2004); gender and science education (John-Steiner, 1999); educational psychology (Leadbetter, 2005); professional learning in Higher Education (Knight, Tait & Yorke, 2006); and doctoral education (Beauchamp et al., 2009).

Roth (2004) has been a major proponent of AT and has argued that AT is an enormously beneficial tool in education for understanding social processes, since social actors produce and reproduce themselves as being affiliated with a given community through the allocations, exchanges and assimilations that make up the interactions that compromise human activity. If one uses this conceptualisation, identity is a by-product and the lynch pin that holds an activity system together, which is based upon the supposition "the existence of the subject who, regulated by emotions, engages with an object of motive-directed activity, and who becomes aware of itself as self" (Roth, 2007:

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56). AT concentrates on the achievement of long-term goals or outcomes through the use of mediational tools, such as language, concepts or signs, within a community controlled by rules and division of labour (Engestrom, 1987). The attainment of a Masters degree constitutes a long-term goal, which entails a progression towards a given outcome via a concerted, cognisant and goal-directed action, made possible by an engagement in a number of activity systems. The various activity systems (see figure 3.1 below) comprise of components that must collaborate in order to achieve an objective or purpose made possible by that activity system.
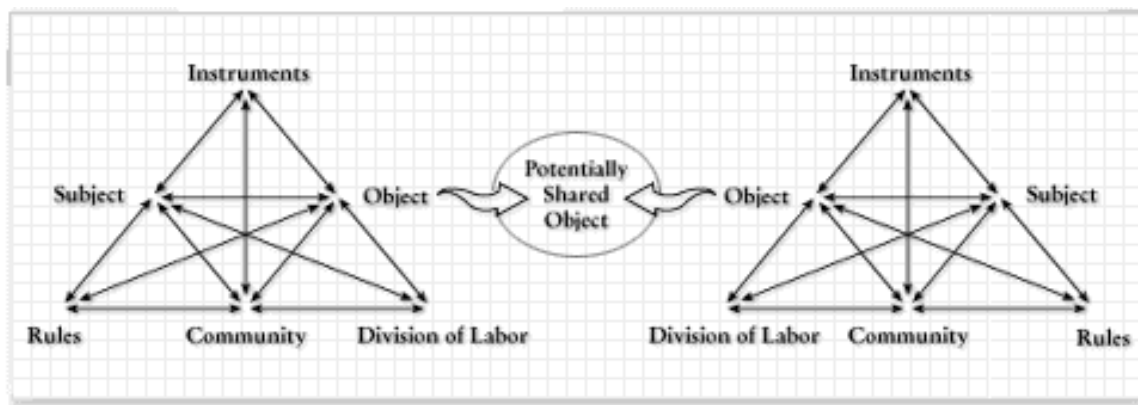
Figure 3.1: The shared purpose of AT

Source: Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (2010)

This piece of research is primarily concerned with the internal subsystem of an activity system - the internal triangle with the co-ordinates subject, object and community. This subsystem is associated with the interplay of subject and community, which is geared towards a definitive purpose or object, which has previously been theorized as the postgraduate student's progress under the mutual influence of an object and a community (Beauchamp et al., 2009). Analogously, the MA supervisor (subject), operates in various contexts (a university, a faculty, a discipline). This can be recognised as an activity system, which advances towards goals or objects that ultimately enable a supervisee to produce a Masters thesis. Another example of such an activity system can be observed if we view supervision from the point of view of the supervisee. Here the supervisee (subject) interacts with their supervisor (object), but their interaction may be affected by

social relationships beyond their own dyad (community). Coupled with this, the larger triangle in the activity system also yields influence: verbal or written contracts may be made concerning the submission of written work or time boundaries (rules). In order for the discussion to be of benefit, various mediational tools may have to be used, most probably discipline specific language (instruments), or other people may be suggested that hold a degree of expertise in an area relevant to the student's interest (division of labour).

An activity system "is inherently a dynamic structure, continuously undergoing change in its parts, in its relations, and as a whole" (Roth, 2004: 4). This characteristic dynamism of activity systems, seen in the perpetual metamorphosis of the elements that constitute both individual and group relationships, infers an internal contradiction and agitation that belies all activity systems (Englestrom, 1987). The consequences of these internal contradictions on the participants in the system and the attainment of relevant outcomes cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, this has been the case in the past, especially in the literature on postgraduate supervision (McCrea & Brasseur, 2003; Geller, 2001). Bearing this dynamism in mind, it may be asserted that postgraduate students may operate in many activity systems - activity system networks - where tensions experienced in one system may feed into another system, tensions that go beyond the stress of moving from one system to another due to a various on objects, community, etc. (see Beauchamp et al., 2009).

However, the good news is that the role played by these internal contradictions has become centre stage in the most recent manifestation of AT: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Nussbaumer, 2012). A fundamental aspect of CHAT, missing from earlier conceptualisations of AT, was that transformation arises out of the 'internal contradictions' in an activity system by allowing participants to engage in knowledge construction thus making change possible (Engeström, 1999a). Core to the CHAT perspective is the acknowledgement that human activity is mediated by cultural tools be they artefacts (pencils, computers, books), the invisible tools of the mind (language,

perception, imagination), or procedures/concepts/practices, which scaffold human action (calculators, specialist research software) (Cole, 1999: 90–91).

Drawing upon CHAT, it may be advanced that if we were to ignore the internal contradictions that exist in MA supervision, we would also ignore the possibility that MA supervision may transform each parties learning given that the context provides the relevant cultural tools. By using CHAT as a way to understand the relational dynamics that inform MA supervision, we come to see the supervisory dyad as an interaction between two activity systems (those of the supervisor and the supervisee). It is in this interaction that particular kinds of transformative capabilities may be nurtured, inviting both parties to play, to reformulate who they are and engage in the creative possibilities provided by research, thus making it possible for both supervisors and supervisees to radically re-evaluate how they interact with one another in the space provided by MA supervision (Somekh & Saunders, 2007).

Conceptually, CHAT is an elaboration on AT. The CHAT model's characteristics were found to be more in harmony with the vicissitudes of experience that make up MA supervision. This is especially true on at least two levels. Firstly, the MA experience is constantly in a state of flux and is instrumental in the development of identity (Beauchamp et al., 2009). And secondly, both parties in MA supervision operate in a variety of activity systems which in turn influence the supervisory dyad (Lesko et al., 2008). Beauchamp et al. (2009) also observed that there may also be a transformative dimension at play in postgraduate supervision, where students try to influence the context in which they find themselves while simultaneously being influenced themselves. This research is interested in recognising how the tensions experienced within other activity systems may influence the relational dynamics within the MA supervisory dyad and what effects this has upon each parties' academic identity. This concern led to the adoption of AT as a relevant methodological tool that can provide a deeper understanding of the experience of MA supervision.

3.2.1 AT-influenced Methodology

AT-influenced methodologies have previously been used to study teacher's professional development (Smagorinsky et al., 2004), gender and science education (John-Steiner, 1999); educational psychology (Leadbetter, 2005), professional learning in Higher Education (Knight et al., 2006) and doctoral education (Beauchamp et al., 2009). Some of the protocols developed in these studies have been adapted for the purposes of this research, especially those developed by Beauchamp et al. (2009). Protocols were designed to glean as much information from both students and their supervisors as possible. The central concepts derived from AT (Englestrom, 1987) were used to develop a framework for each of the protocols. The objective behind these conventions was to give the participants space to elaborate on their experiences of activity systems relevant to MA supervision, to map the tensions between their individual agency and a larger context, and to observe how various contexts and identities converge and are acted upon within the supervisory dyad. These protocols consisted of periodic supervisor and supervisee logs, supervisee interviews and supervisor interviews

CHAT served as a conceptual framework for this research for data collection and analysis. The rationale behind doing this was that within the typical supervisory session, two knowledge producing activity systems are at play, that of the supervisor and of the supervisee. Each activity system produces knowledge that may be used within an academic context, however each is informed by separate motives. When the activity systems of supervisor and supervisee come in contact with one another, especially in written or spoken communication, certain tensions may arise. These tensions come about through both parties' actions being informed by separate motives. These tensions are rectified through the process of negotiation, and the resulting knowledge produced can be deemed negotiated knowledge (NK). As a result, both the semi-structured interview questions and the Activity Theory Logs were built around the following themes, derived from Engeström's (1987:78) structure of a human activity system: Subject, Object, Mediating Tools (resources, concepts materials), Rules (explicit/implicit), Community, The Division of Labour.

3.2.2 Research Questions derived from CHAT:

As mentioned previously, for this research CHAT acted as conceptual framework that served to frame the phenomenon under investigation in a particular way and offers guidelines for further, more in-depth analysis. Framing this study's main research question (what are the relational dynamics in MA supervision?) using the CHAT perspective, causes the phenomenon under investigation to be reframed in an alternative way. Arising out of this reframing certain sub-questions need to be asked. These questions form the basis for this research. They are as follows:

1) What relational processes inform the MA supervisory relationship? (Subject)
2) How is the shared object of MA supervision negotiated? (Object)
3) How is knowledge constructed in supervision? (Mediating Tools)
4) In what way is conflict manifested and dealt with in the dyad? (Rules)
5) In what way is the supervisory dyad effected by the contexts that it finds itself in (Community)
6) How is the division of labour understood within the supervisory dyad? (The Division of Labour)

3.2.3 Participants (See Appendices 10 and 11 for demographic collection forms)

The participants in this study consisted of three case study dyads from two taught Masters courses and one research only Masters course. Dyads included the supervisor and their supervisee from three different disciplines in the Humanities. Supervisees were students undertaking either a taught or a research only Masters degree during the academic year 2010-2011.

3.2.4 Measures

3.2.4.1 Obtaining Access to Participants
Access to MA supervisors was obtained through academic networking. Supervisees were selected by the MA supervisors during the academic year 2010/2011.

3.2.4.2 Plain Language Statement (PLS) (See Appendix 1)

Both supervisors and supervisees were given a Plain Language Statement. The rational behind issuing a PLS was to fulfill the responsibility to fully inform participants. The PLS served to directly address the participants and give them clear, specific information about what their participation will entail. Efforts were made to make the PLS audience specific, to avoid coercion and to be explicit and informative.

3.2.4.3 Consent Forms (See Appendix 2)

Consent forms need to be written in simple language that is understandable to the subjects. Copies of the consent form and the PLS were provided to each subject and a signed copy retained by the researcher. Aspects of informed consent that are required in all studies involving human subjects include: the research purpose and the data collection procedures; benefits; risks; the opportunity to withdraw without penalty; the opportunity to ask questions; the amount of time required of the subjects; confidentiality of data and final disposition of data (Deakin University, 2010). These aspects were borne in mind when composing the consent form for this research.

An effort was made to minimise the time, cost, and effort required of participants. The scheduling of data collection was structured around the convenience of the data providers and the annual academic cycle (Bhattacharya, 2007). Data collection activities that collected similar information were co-ordinated in an effort to consolidate and schedule similar information needs into a single collection where feasible. Personal and analytic journals were updated following each data collection period.

The duration of interviews were approximately one hour per session. Regular evaluations of ongoing data collections were scheduled with supervisors and supervisees to assess the continuing need and appropriateness of the methods used. Where it was feasible, multiple options were provided for respondents to submit data, which included electronic and postal submissions (Bhattacharya, 2007). Confidential data was protected by not discussing confidential aspects of the data collection activity with unauthorised persons.

Copies of transcripts, surveys, and other data will be kept in a secure place for six years and then disposed of (Ogloff & Otto, 1991).

3.5 Data Collection Procedures (See Tables 3.1 and 3.2)

The data for this research consisted of a total of 45 data files comprising of 5 data collection sequences per dyad. Each data collection sequence entailed 4 supervisor interviews, 4 supervisor AT logs, 10 reflective journals (both pre and post interview), 1 supervisee interview, 1- 3 supervisee AT logs depending on the dyad.

Table 3.1: Data Collection Procedures

Data Collection Procedures	
Individual Semi-structured Interviews with MA Supervisors	Appendices 3-6
Individual Semi-structured Interviews with MA Supervisees	Appendix 7
Activity Theory (AT) Logs for MA Supervisors	Appendix 8
Activity Theory (AT) Logs for MA Supervisees	Appendix 9
Reflective Journals on the MA Supervisor's Data	Appendix 12
Reflective Journals on the MA Supervisee's Data	Appendix 13

Data Collection Procedures	MA Supervisor	MA Supervisee
Interview	4 x 3 Supervisor	1 x 3 Supervisee
Activity Theory Log	4 x 3 Supervisor	1- 3 x 3 Supervisee (dyad dependant
Reflective Journal	4 x 3 pre- interview with supervisor	1 x 3 pre- interview with supervisee
	4 x 3 post-interview with supervisor	1 x 3 post- interview with supervisee

3.5.1 Individual Semi-structured Interviews (See appendices 3-7 for supervisor and supervisee interview guides)

A semi- structured interview is a term that used to describe a diverse range of interviewing techniques, however it is usually affiliated with qualitative research. The distinguishing feature of semi-structured interviews is that they retain an elastic and open structure. This is in contrast to structured interviews, which have a structured order of questions that are asked in exactly the same way to all interviewees. This is not to say that semi-structured interviews are without structure as they tend to be organized around an aide memoire or interview guide. This compromises of topics, themes, or areas to be covered during the course of the interview. The object behind this is to ensure adaptability in how and in what order questions are asked, and this also allows particular areas to be followed up on and developed with different interviewees (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing, 2012). Semi-structured interviews can be administered with a reasonably open framework that makes allowance for focused, conversational, two-way communication. This type of interview can be used both to give and receive information,

engaging both the interviewer and the interviewee in a dialogic relationship (Whiting, 2008).

In contrast to the questionnaire structure (where intricate questions are pre-formulated) the semi-structured interview begins with general questions or topics. Relevant topics (such as the student's graduate experience) are, at the outset, identified and the possible relationships between these topics and the issues (such as supervisor availability, expense, course delivery) form the basis for more distinguishing questions that emerge more spontaneously from the context (Dearnley, 2005).

Within this interview framework, not all questions are fabricated and phrased prior to the event. The majority of questions are generated in the course of the interview, thus giving both the interviewer and the interviewee the discretion to probe for details or discuss issues. Semi-structured interviewing is governed by nothing more than some form of interview guide. An example of this is a set of themes that is prepared beforehand, and provides an adaptable framework for the interview (Diefenbach, 2009). For the purposes of this research, the interview themes were derived from Activity Theory (AT). Four interviews were done with each supervisor and one interview was done with each supervisee over the course of one academic year. The length of each interview was approximately one hour.

3.5.2 Activity Theory (AT) Logs (See Appendices 8 and 9)

The aim behind the administration of AT logs was to allow for 'textual snapshots' (Beauchamp et al., 2009) of the MA experience that included relevant items that affect their supervisory experience. These logs involved addressing a sequence of contexts that are related to their activity of working towards different objectives related to the MA experience, and outlining the tensions at play between different communities or different roles. Responses to these logs were used to analyse how the various AT elements impacted upon the relational dynamics associated with identity formation within the supervisory dyad. Logs were submitted to each participant electronically, via Survey Monkey, four times during the academic year 2010/2011 (Survey Monkey, 2010).

The logs derived from AT were designed in such a way so that the MA participants were able to provide an account of their supervisory experience: the supervisory encounter itself; the impact of other activity systems; the participation in an intellectual community; and factors affecting academic identity. The logs were an excellent way to comprehend the intricacy and conflicts associated with both MA supervisors and supervisees' experience of supervision, while concurrently capturing the habitual or mundane nature of this reality (Beauchamp et al., 2009). Different logs were created for supervisors and supervisees. For an example of the supervisee log see appendix 8. For an example of the supervisor log see appendix 9.

3.5.3 Reflective Journaling (See Appendices 12 and 13)

Journaling aids researchers to develop critical thinking skills, reflection and self understanding (Schuessler, Wilder, & Byrd, 2012). Journaling implies writing to learn and ultimately becomes enables the researcher to engage in introspection and critically analyse the phenomena under investigation. It is advised that reflective journaling should not be too structured, as this may limit or constrict thought and reflections (Sealy, 2012).

For this research, a reflective journal was kept both previous to and prior to each and every interview. The objective behind this was to record feelings, insights and concepts that may inform analysis, subsequent data collection procedures and the PhD writing process. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314) define a reflective journal as "a kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis or as needed, records a variety of information about self and method" and they recommend that a reflective journal include:

1. The daily schedule and logistics of the study
2. A personal diary that provides the opportunity for catharsis and reflection upon what is happening in terms of one's own values and interests, and
3. A methodological log in which decisions and associated rationales are recorded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In my experience of writing the reflective journals for this research, I found that it enabled me to critically analyse the emerging data, to capture and develop important ideas that were later found to be of central importance to the final analysis. An illustrative example of this was the emergence of the core category of disciplined improvisation of academic identity. As I reflected upon and wrote about the dynamics at play in the MA supervisory relationship, I repeatedly alternated between inductive and deductive modes of reflection by repeatedly asking myself the questions "What seems to be going on here?" and "What is really happening?" (Scott, 2004). It was out of this process of reflection that this core category emerged.

3.6 Methodological Procedures

The subsequent factors influenced the methodological procedure for the both the MA supervisor and supervisee semi-structured interviews and AT Logs: harmonising the central elements of AT with MA participants' activity systems; using language that is readily accessible to participants; and piloting both the interviews and the Activity Theory logs.

3.6.1 Harmonising the Central Elements of AT with Participants' Activity Systems

The main objective behind using the central elements of AT was to map the heterogeneity, depth and variety, alongside the banality and monotony, of how MA supervisors and supervisees experience supervision. The semi-structured interviews were structured around the central tenets of AT (Bryant, 2005) in order to get an alternative snapshot of the relational dynamics at play in MA supervision. Logs have been used as means of structuring the supervision process, allowing more accountability on both sides, as well as facilitating successful thesis completion (Yeatman, 1995). For this research, AT logs were used as a means of sequentially recognising the diversity of participants' activities - the individuals involved, identity development, the type of activities, the

emotional resonance associated with various types of activity - and how these impacted upon the supervisory relationship.

3.6.2 Using language that is readily accessible to participants

Sample protocols that were used for the data collection are included in Appendices 3-9. The language used in the protocols needed to be familiar to the participants, therefore for different demographic participants it was useful to rephrase certain items. In the interviews, care was taken to explain relevant AT concepts and relate them specifically to the supervision context. Participants were allowed to make their own interpretation of terms, however the interviewer always made sure to clarify the meanings behind each interpretation.

For the logs, the language of AT was rephrased as follows: 'tools' became 'resources'; 'division of labour' became 'activities'. Within this protocol, some items were designed to be completion items, list selections, or were left open-ended. Nine items were designed, including a broad "Any further comments" concluding question, and were built around the three points of the internal triangle of an Activity System: Subject; Object; and Community. These three points were selected for the following reasons: they constellate around a central nucleus of tension within the postgraduate experience (Lesko et al., 2008); they are of direct relevance to the development of the supervisory dyad (Manathunga, 2005) ; and they represent a underrepresented facet of how academic identity comes into being (Geller & Foley, 2009).

3.6.3 Rationale Behind Interview Questions

The rationale behind the interview questions for both the MA supervisors and supervisees was derived from the activity theory model (See table 6 below), which is based on six interdependent elements (Bryant, 2005):

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Table 3.3: Outline of the rationale behind interview questions derived from AT.

Outline of Rationale Behind Interview Questions Derived From AT	
Object	Purposeful activity within the MA dyad
Subject	Person or group that worked on activity objects (purposeful activities) with mediational tools.
Community	The social context of the MA supervisory relationship
Tools	Artifacts or concepts used by subjects to achieve various tasks
Division of Labour	The social hierarchy within the MA supervisory dyad
Rules	Protocols and guidelines for activities and behaviours in the MA supervisory dyad

1) *Object* was defined for the purposes of this study as being related to purposeful activity. It encompasses material (the dissertation, the physical artifact of academic writing), social (community of practice) and cultural elements (the culture of academia). For the MA supervisors, this element was used to map their background in postgraduate supervision; how they came to be a supervisor; the underlying objectives behind each supervisory session; how they felt about the dynamics within the MA supervisory relationship; and how they experienced the role of supervisor. For the MA supervisees, this element was used to illustrate how they came to do a Masters; their relationship with their supervisor; and their experience of doing an MA.

2) *Subject* was defined as a person or group who work on activity objects with mediational tools (artifacts). For the MA supervisors, questions related to this element entailed asking if learning how to be a supervisor was a reproductive or reflective process; what motivates them when supervising; and the role played by empathy, guilt and expectations in the supervisory process. For MA supervisees, questions related to motivational factors, what they felt were the attributes of a good supervisee/supervisor; and what was their idea of a successful supervision.

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3) *Community* was defined as the social context of the MA supervisory relationship. For both MA supervisors and supervisees, interview questions derived from the AT element of community dealt with the experience of the internal dynamics of the MA supervisory dyad itself; the impact of outside factors on the supervisory relationship and how both supervisors and supervisees may be effected; the influence of career paths; how supervisors are allocated; where MA supervision fits in relation to the broader academic context; and how the culture of supervision is manifested in Irish Higher Education.

4) *Tools* were defined as the artifacts (or concepts) used by subjects to achieve various tasks. Tools used during MA supervision include relational, writing and research skills, which are instigated, developed and made use of during the activity of MA supervision. For both MA supervisors and supervisees, the tools element focused on how knowledge was constructed in the supervisory relationship and what resources, concepts or materials were felt to be useful or beneficial to the MA experience.

5) *Division of labor* was defined as the social strata. This was understood in the MA supervisory context as being representative of the hierarchical structure within HE institutions and how different powers and activities are allocated to different people and artifacts in the HE system. For both participants, questions that characterized this element dealt with the internal power dynamics within the MA supervisory dyad; the roles played by responsibility and accountability; and how the boundaries of the supervisory relationship itself were negotiated.

6) *Rules* were defined as the protocols and guidelines for activities and behaviours in the MA supervisory dyad. The questions derived from the rules element looked at the explicit and implicit rules that guide behaviour in the supervisory dyad. Both MA supervisors and supervisees were asked questions about how respect was shown in the relationship; how the supervision meetings were structured; the

impact on supervision caused by wider changes in Irish HE; and who was felt to be responsible for the end product of MA supervision.

The final question in all the interviews was an open one, asking the participant to supply a metaphor or drawing of the supervisor experience. This question was designed to get participants to creatively communicate their experience of MA supervision. All interviews were semi-structured. The third and fourth round of interviews with MA supervisors dealt specifically with follow up questions from previous interviews and supervisory logs. All names were changed for confidentiality reasons.

3.6.4 Rationale behind the questions in the Student AT Log

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of MA supervision, supervision must be positioned as being affected by and competing with other activity systems, the outcomes from these activity systems have a profound resonance for the tone, pitch and tempo of the supervisory dyad. The intent behind items 1 and 2 is to develop, in a panoramic sense, how the MA participants emotionally respond to various triggers within the MA experience. These questions were designed to measure just how aware each participant is towards an ultimate goal. Items 3 and 4 are framed in such a way as to observe what other resources the participant draws upon and the relevance of this to needing assistance from their supervisor. This shows what other resources are partly responsible for a participant's progress, and to what degree other factors beyond the supervisory session affect the participant's sense of identity and community.

These items uncover the network of activity systems in which each actor operates, and shows how these impact upon the role played by the supervisory relationship. Items 5 and 6 aim to realise how a MA student perceives helpful or unhelpful contributions, and again mirrors their own process of identity formation. Items 7 and 8 attempt to highlight the challenges and difficulties that exist within the MA experience related to factors that affect the supervisory relationship. They aim to provide an insight into the amount of educational self-efficacy of the student, as well as pinpointing the tensions associated with being involved in competing, vacillating, overlapping or distinct activity systems.

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Item 9 is included so as participants can give feedback on the log (Beauchamp et al., 2009).

3.6.5 Rationale behind the questions in the Supervisor AT Log

The framing of the Supervisor AT log mirrors that of those of the Student AT log, with the exception of items 5 and 6. Question 6 was deemed to be unnecessary and Question 5 was incorporated into question 4. Questions 7, 8 and 9 in the Student AT log correlate with questions 5, 6, and 7 in the Supervisor AT log (See appendix 8).

3.6.6 Pilot Study

Pilot studies of interviews and AT logs were undertaken in March 2010. Two semi-structured interviews and AT logs were completed with an MA supervisor in University College Cork and an MA supervisee in Cork Institute of Technology. From piloting the data collection procedures, it was found that certain interview and log questions derived from AT (tools, division of labour) needed to be rephrased and adapted in order to better suit the context under investigation in both the logs and the interviews. The AT logs were also revised and re-ordered so as to complement the developmental stages associated with MA study. From the pilot study, further topics (respect, motivation and responsibility) emerged from the MA supervisee's pilot study as salient areas of research.

3.7 Data Analysis

Sources of data consisted of primary sources (interviews, student logs and participant reflections) and secondary sources (literature, research in the field, internet sources). The focus of this research was to explore how both MA supervisors and supervisees understand the relational dynamics in MA supervision.

3.7.1 Grounded Theory

Interviews and AT logs were analysed using grounded theory. Grounded theory is an inductive approach that analyses text for similarities within and across contexts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A disadvantage of this process is that it fractures the data in order to rearrange texts into concepts and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The grounded theory method "consists of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 509). Grounded theory extols the virtues of firsthand knowledge and aspires towards an interpretative understanding of the subject's meanings. The strategies of this approach include: (a) simultaneous collection and analysis of data, (b) a two-step data coding process, (c) comparative methods, (d) memo writing directed towards the manufacture of conceptual analysis of the data, (e) sampling to distil the researcher's budding theoretical ideas, and (f) integration of the theoretical framework (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 511).

In analysing the data, an inductive approach was used. This is where substantive themes are defined as they arise from the data, in congruence with the principles of grounded theory forwarded by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Data analysis was organised in two phases. The initial phase consisted of a vertical analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994) where respondents' interviews were individually analysed. The second phase was a comparative or horizontal analysis. Here Glaser and Strauss' method of constant comparative analysis was used to uncover common patterns and differences. This process was be done and redone repeatedly, and changes to the coding process were made whenever it was deemed necessary.

Themes that emerged from the data influenced the direction of further data collection for this research project. This analysis allowed the researcher to check for recurring themes, regularities, and conflicting patterns that arose out of participants' responses and accounts. The discussion of the results derived from the data elucidated both the MA supervisors and supervisees experience of supervision by investigating contextual,

emotional, academic and personal elements, the dynamics between them, and how these in turn effect each parties perception of the relational dynamics in supervision.

Grounded theory methods have an added emphasis upon analysis, not the methods of data collection. This is convergent with the use of limited interview studies. One of the main proponents behind grounded theory, Glaser (1992), warns of the danger of forcing data into preconceived categories and asserts that the constant comparison approach and a constant emphasis on process are strategies designed to inoculate against formulaic analysis. Data collection in this context, forces researchers to ask questions and to follow their intuition, if not in the conversational interviews, then in the observer's notes of what to look for. A wealth of data is constructed by the researcher's collection of relevant details.

Glaser (1998) asserts that the data will eventually become transparent, and through this lucent lens one will observe the intrinsic social processes that operate in the field through what the respondents inform us as being relevant. Yet, what the researchers observe to be happening may be fictitious or superficial (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1996). In this sense, what the respondent assumes, overlooks or misinterprets may be more important than what they say. In this research, the data was treated as a narrative construction, where the stories people tell are understood to be reconstructions of their experience, not the authentic experience itself. Secondary data came from various sources, such as literature, internet sources, conversations, academic leaflets, presentations, observations, self-interviews etc. Analysis of these materials started with coding, was shaped by memoing, and finally was moulded (not without a concentrated effort) into a PhD dissertation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The theoretical sampling consisted of three research sites: MA supervisors, MA supervisees and the MA supervisory relationship itself. Grounded theorists code their data as it emerges from the process of collection. This coding does not entail the pigeonholing of information into 'ready-made' concepts. Coding involves an interaction with and a questioning of the data. The objective behind this is the development of a new

perspective, and this is done through researcher's interpretations of their data. Grounded theory coding initiates a cycle of theory development. Initial or open coding starts off the process. This is done by carefully examining each line of data and the determining actions or events that occur within them. This "line-by-line" coding hones our use of sensitising concepts (background ideas that illuminate the complete research problem). These sensitising concepts are the foundation upon which analysis can be built (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 515).

In order to gain an insight into what is happening within the research context, and people's actions in the field, the open codes must be related to one another. This is known as axial coding. This entails the use of the constant comparison method. This method implies (a) comparing various people (their opinions, situations, experiences, perceptions, and situations), (b) comparing data that comes from the same individuals at different points in time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (comparing data with category, and (e) comparing a category with other categories (Charmaz, 1983, 1995; Glaser 1978, 1992). Towards the end of the data analysis, selective coding was employed to pinpoint one category to be the core category, to which all other categories can be related (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Writing memos is the transitional stage between coding and the elementary composition of the final analysis. This aids the researcher to engage in innovative thinking and to engage with the data in new ways. Through memo writing, one enhances upon the processes, assumptions and actions that belie the codes created. Memoing encourages us to further investigate our codes and elaborate upon the processes that they deal with. Memoing invariably substantiates, enriches and structures the coding process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

3.7.2 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling was used in this research and is recognised as being emblematic of grounded theory methodology (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Theoretical sampling can be defined as a process of data collection that is guided by a developing theoretical framework rather than pre-existing population dimensions (Strauss, 1987). Grounded theory utilises a concept- indicator model of analysis, which utilises the constant comparison method of analysis. Schwandt (2001: 110-111) outlines the processes that bely this form of analysis:

> Empirical indicators from the data… are compared, searching for similaries and differences. From this process, the analyst identifies underlying uniformities in the indicators and produces a coded category or concept. Concepts are compared with more empirical indicators and with each other to sharpen the definition of the concept and to define its properties. Theories are formed from proposing plausible relationships among concepts and sets of concepts. Tentative theories or theoretical propositions are further explored through additional instances in the data. The testing of the emergent theory is guided by theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling means that the sampling of additional incidents, events, activities, populations, and so on is directed by the evolving theoretical constructs. Comparisons between the explanatory adequacy of the theoretical constructs and these additional empirical indicators go on continuiously until theoretical saturation is reached (i.e., additional analysis no longer contributes to anything new about a concept). In this way, the resulting theory is considered conceptually dense and grounded in the data.

In Glaser's (1978) study, he argues that theoretical sampling occurs when the researcher simultaneously collects, codes, and analyses the data and out of this process decides what data to collect next and where to find it in order to formulate an emerging theory. Initial sampling procedures are premised upon a general sociological perspective and a general research question. For example in this research, the guiding research question was "What are the relational dynamics that inform the MA supervisory dyad?"

Key recommendations by Glaser (1978) were used for the purposes of this study that specifically relate to theoretical sampling. The relevant recommendations included staying open by changing interview styles and enabling participants to elaborate in a more informative manner on categories that were deemed to be central to the emerging theory.

Out of the theoretical sampling for this study, various theoretical constructs begin to develop and categorical evidence was needed to support and refine the emerging ideas. This involved determining which data sources (groups of people, academic literature, etc.) afforded the richest and most salient data, and what cases (particular individuals, settings and documents) drawn from these sources were most illustrative of the empirical indicators that in turn lead to category development (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). For the purposes of this research, these methodological procedures were reflected in a theoretical sampling guide (see figure 3.2)

The theoretical sampling guide for this research consists of four stages: selective sampling; open coding; axial coding; and selective coding. Selective sampling involved the initial recruitment of participants from three MA supervisory dyads in the Humanities and a review of the literature on the area of postgraduate supervision. The first wave of open coding of the participant-generated data set (N=9) gave rise to a number of emerging concepts and, codes which were then repeatedly compared and contrasted with the existing literature. These emerging categories were also used to inform subsequent data collection procedures.

The selective sampling procedures generated a substantial amount of data and the open coding provided a related number of emerging concepts and codes. In order to give priority to the relational dynamics at play in MA supervision, it was determined that CHAT (which stresses the importance of relationships and identity formation) was particularly relevant to the theoretical sampling needs needed for axial coding and category development. The concepts derived from CHAT enabled the researcher to

develop relevant concept indicators, which in turn were subject to a constant comparative analysis as derived from Glaser's (1978) grounded theory methodology. The grid in the axial coding section in the theoretical sampling guide has 42 cells that indicate the seven types of data source and the six concepts that make up a CHAT activity system. This grid can be used to record cases that are theoretically sampled and examined for signs of emerging categories. The end-result of this process is a saturated category.

The objective behind selective coding is to identify a core category, a category that encapsulates the majority of the variation found in the data (Strauss, 1987) and to advance relationships between categories in order to integrate the theoretical framework. At this stage of analysis, theoretical sampling requires the purposeful selection of cases in order to test if the theory is applicable to a broad range of circumstances (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In order to do this, I chose to adopt a selective coding strategy pioneered by Patton (1990: 182) where he advises the use of confirming and disconfirming case sampling, which are selected "for the purpose of elaborating and deepening initial analysis, seeking exceptions, testing variation". In utilising this strategy, it enabled the researcher to focus upon the cases that were theoretically salient and suitable to purpose of his study, which in turn gave rise to rich concept indicators that were ideal for both comparision and category development (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007).

Selective Sampling

| Three MA Supervisory Dyads from the Humanities | Academic Literature on Postgraduate Supervision |

| Participant-generated Data Set | Emerging Categories |

| Emerging Categories Compared and Contrasted with the existing Literature |

Open Coding

Axial Coding

	MA Sup Interviews	MA Spee Interviews	MA SupAT Log	MA SpeeAT Log	Reflect Journals on MA Sup's Data	Reflect Journals on MA Spees' Data	Data from Other Acad Lit
Object							
Subject							
Community							
Tools							
Division of Labour							
Rules							

Saturated Category

Selective Coding

| Confirming/Disconfirming Case Sampling | | | | | |

Core Categories & Theoretical Framework

Figure 3.2: Theoretical Sampling Guide

3.8 Limitations of the Study

3.8.1 Access to the Field

One limitation of this study was that the majority of interviews were carried out with MA supervisors as opposed to MA supervisees. A total of twelve in-depth interviews were with MA supervisors and three in-depth interviews were with MA supervisees. The reason behind this was a general reluctance on the part of supervisees to become involved in the study.

3.8.2 Time

Originally the time allocated for the collection of the data was the academic year 2010-2011. However, because of the availability of participants the data collection was finally completed in October 2011.

3.8.3 Students Chosen by Supervisors

Supervisees were recommended by their supervisors, this had to do with the practicalities of MA supervision.

3.8.4 Gender

Although a number of male supervisors were asked to participate in this study, all declined or felt uncomfortable being involved in such a study. This reaction came as a surprise to the researcher who assumed that the emotional division of labour was a thing of the past especially in the enlightened world of academia, as a result all MA supervisors were female.

3.8.5 Disciplines under review

The disciplines under review in this research project were: Education; English; and History.

3.8.6 Time-Lines

The timeline of this piece of research is illustrated in the table below.

Table 3.4: Timeline of PhD

Timeline of PhD	
September 2008	Cohort PhD Year 1
June 2009	First PhD Proposal
September 2009	Cohort PhD Year 2
November 2009	Revised PhD Proposal
March 2010	Pilot Study
September 2010	Cohort PhD Year 3 Data Collection and Analysis begin Simultaneously
January 2011	First Set of Findings Analysed
October 2011	Conclusion of Data Analysis
September 2012	First Rough Draft of PhD Thesis

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Williams (2009) describes the act of researching Higher Education while simultaneously working in a HE environment as having "guilty knowledge". This most definitely strikes a chord for me as a researcher of MA supervisory relationships, as I currently work in a HE institution. The following ethical dilemmas arose for me during the course of the research:

3.9.1 Identity Transgressions

This dilemma emerged throughout the research. Despite the expressed desire for confidentiality on the part of the participants and the researcher, participants did

compromise the protection of their own identity through the disclosure of personal information during the data collection procedures. This echoes the problems outlined by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) when one engages in "backyard' research, where one studies one's own organization, friends or work setting. A major issue for this researcher arose around the disclosure of information surrounding power dynamics that emerged in the course of the study.

3.9.2 The Research Space

There was an obvious ethical consideration at play over where interviews were held. Interviews with MA supervisors were completed in their offices, their professional space where they felt comfortable and in control. This was in stark contrast with the sequestered spaces that were used to conduct interviews with MA supervisees. These consisted of empty classrooms and coffee shops, which did not best facilitate the agency of the participant.

In the course of conducting the interviews, certain ethical issues arose. One of specific relevance for this study was the implications of the research space in terms of the research sites. The interviews with MA supervisors occurred in their offices, the actual site of their MA supervisory practice. As a result, they felt more relaxed and comfortable when answering the interview questions as the space was a familiar one where they felt that they were in control of the situation. Unfortunately this was not the case with the MA supervisees when they were interviewed. Their interviews took place in 'borrowed spaces', such as coffee shops or classrooms. As a result it may be argued that these 'borrowed spaces' may have held negative associations for the supervisees that may have impacted upon their comfort levels in answering the interview questions and may have served to further highlight the power asymmetry at play between the supervisee and the supervisor.

3.9.3 Role Conflict

At the heart of the ethical dilemmas that informed this research was the role conflict that existed for the researcher by his simultaneously being a HE practitioner and a HE researcher. Clark and Sharf (2007: 405) echo Williams' (2009) idea of the burden of guilty knowledge that comes about through a participant being "seduced by the caring interview". Since the researcher is familiar with the processes at play in HE, it was easy to develop rapport with the participants who were MA supervisors. However, this was not the case when dealing with the MA supervisees, who were much more reluctant to become engaged in the research process possibly because the researcher was seen to be part of the HE system and therefore was biased towards the HE practitioners rather than the students.

3.10 Conclusion

This piece of research differs from others that already exist in the field of postgraduate supervision on a number of points:

- An exclusive focus upon Masters (MA) supervision (there is a tendency to overlook the MA in favour of the doctoral experience)
- A focus upon the relationship between supervisor and supervisee
- Both supervisors <u>and</u> supervisees were interviewed for this piece of research. In the supervision literature, one group has been exclusively focused upon to the detriment of the other.
- It adopts an Activity Theory- influenced methodology, which serves to highlight conflicts and tensions at play in relationships on individual, social, environmental and institutional levels.

The next chapter will analyse the data collected and outline some of the relational dynamics at play in the MA supervisory dyad.

CHAPTER 4

CLAIMS AND FINDINGS

"Delicious Ambiguity": Supervisor Ambiguity and Supervisee Boundaries In MA Supervision.

I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious Ambiguity.
— *Gilda Radner*

And this is one of the major questions of our lives: how we keep boundaries, what permission we have to cross boundaries, and how we do so.
- *A. B. Yehoshua*

Chapter Outline	
Negotiation in MA Supervision	Motivation is central to the negotiation of knowledge in MA supervision.
Findings from the data	
What Motivates MA Supervisors?	Ambiguity and the Negotiation of Clarity
Situational Ambiguity	The ambiguity of integrating the student into the research culture
Quality Ambiguity	What constitutes best supervisory practice and who is made accountable for the quality of research produced
Subjective Ambiguity	What supervisors subjectively perceive to be a professional academic identity
What Motivates MA Supervisees?	Boundaries and Identity
Relationship Boundaries	Boundaries related to the supervisor-supervisee relationship
Power Boundaries	Boundaries between expert/professional knowledge system of the supervisor and the personal knowledge of the MA student
Performance Boundaries	Boundaries related to the performance of an academic identity

4.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at how individual relational dynamics in the MA supervision motivate both supervisors and supervisees. It focuses specifically on how knowledge and identity are negotiated in interaction with these themes, which are specific to this educational context. It does so through the voices of both supervisors and supervisees themselves; through their own words about their world and their processes associated with MA research. This is important, because the current understanding of MA supervision has so far rested on rather a small number of qualitative case studies that have tended to focus almost exclusively on the perspective of either the supervisor or the supervisee. Activity Theory (AT) will be used as a conceptual framework to illustrate the findings.

In the literature on the psychology of work, there is a consensus that both emotional and cognitive learning occurs on individual and collective levels, through the process of 'doing' the job (Bierema, 2008; Sebrant, 2008; Soubhi et al., 2009). This is mirrored in the literature on postgraduate supervision, where allocation of supervisee is primarily dictated by virtue of a supervisor having experience and expertise in the supervisee's research area (Daelmans et al., 2005). This is based on the assumption that expertise is gained through the process of doing an activity, or what Boreham (2002) calls work process knowledge. Throughout the literature on the psychology of work and postgraduate supervision there seems to be an overriding assumption that the cognitive elements have primacy in the process of learning (Stayt, 2009; Soubhi et al., 2009).

This study found that another type of learning informs the dynamics at play in MA supervision; a type of learning that simultaneously impacts upon the two parties in the dyad. It is a learning that has both cognitive and emotional elements, but cannot be definitively defined as the preserve of either one. This learning can be illustrated as follows: the supervisor must learn how to produce a service, but at the same time, needs to protect their job and their personal boundaries; whereas the supervisee must learn how to produce a product, and simultaneously must preserve their educational standing and their sense of self. Episodically, these two outcomes clash with one another: the cognitive production of product clashes with the emotional process of self-preservation and care of

the self (Stayt, 2009; Ryvicker, 2009; Lesko et al, 2008). This tension can be further elucidated through the use of the Activity Theory (AT) concept of Negotiated Knowledge (NK). NK gives primacy to the underlying motivations that inform the negotiation of knowledge when two social actors and their accompanying activity systems interact (Worthen, 2008; Muntigl, 2009). I hold that NK is a useful tool for unpacking the relational dynamics that inform MA supervision, as we shall see below.

Activity Theory (AT) by investigating the motivations that fuel the disparate activity systems of both MA supervisors and supervisees. In order to overcome this underlying tension, another form of knowledge must come into being that hinges upon affective motivations, namely negotiated knowledge (NK) (Bleich, 1979; Worthen, 2008; Muntigl, 2009; Sengupta, 2006; Atkinson & Gilleland, 2007).

4.1 Motivation as Central to Negotiated Knowledge in the MA Supervision

The main thing that distinguishes one activity from another lies in the difference between their objects… the object of activity is its motive (Leont'ev, 1977: 5).

Tensions within an activity system can be understood by looking at the motives that bely the action (Leont'ev, 1977; Worthen, 2008; Roth & Lee, 2007). In this sense, activity theory can make known tensions that exist within each activity system within the MA supervisory dyad. It does this by focusing on each activity system's underlying motivations for being involved in the activity under investigation. Applying this to MA supervision, the use of NK enables this research to focus upon the motivations that inform the supervisor and the supervisee's activities in the supervisory relationship. Unfortunately, research into the area of postgraduate supervision has been characterised by an inability to distinguish between two separate motives and two separate activity systems. This has had the unfortunate side-effect of overlooking, ignoring or misunderstanding the activity of supervision.

The term 'activity' used in this research has a specialised meaning, that moves beyond associations of work, function, doing or even effort and agitation. Activity, in the context of this research can be defined as follows:

> *Activity in the narrow sense is a unity of subject-object interaction defined by the subject's motive. It is a system of processes oriented toward the motive, where the meaning of any individual component of the system is determined by its role in attaining the motive (Kaptelenin & Nardi, 2006: 60).*

Here, the term 'activity' accommodates 'operations', 'actions' and 'motives'. Operations are defined as referring to overt behaviours. Actions are constituted through a series of operations. And motives are the organizational principle behind both actions and operations (Kaptelenin & Nardi, 2006). There is a hierarchy at play in 'activity', with operations being at the lowest level, actions at the middle level, and motives at the highest level. The hierarchy of operations to action, and both to motive has a historical precedent in the original first generation of AT. However, the lynchpin in this system is the underlying motive that dictates how an activity comes to be defined.

This definition of activity enables the researcher to examine what appears to be the same behaviour can mean from different perspectives, by elucidating different motives. For example in MA supervision, it was found that techniques or actions that appeared to be aimed at increasing student productivity were also directed towards protecting a supervisor's 'status' or towards aiding a student to achieve their potential. It is only through observing these motives through different activity systems that they can be separated out from one another. Within AT, the motive is the organising principle, that links actions and operations (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006). This principle was very clearly outlined in Worthen's (2008: 324) study on motivation the workplace using AT principles, where it was shown that the management activity system generates knowledge for the production of goods or services, and the activity system of the workers generates knowledge of how to earn a living (Worthen, 2008: 324).

Using NK to delineate what occurs in MA supervision, it may be asserted that the activity system of the supervisor may generate knowledge for academic dissemination, whereas

the supervisee may generate knowledge of how to attain an academic degree (Lesko et al., 2008). The difference between the two systems occurs at a motivational level: what is to be lost and what is to be gained from this interaction? The problem with the existing literature on supervision is that it is based on the assumption that the activity systems of both parties are one and the same, thus overlooking key intrapersonal and social dynamics.

An example of what constitutes motive can be found by posing the question of 'what constitutes a success in any given social situation?' This question moves beyond the operational level of describing what social interaction is and looks at social interaction through the lens of what motivates any given activity. Worthen (2008: 324) uses the example of a grocery warehouse to illustrate the synergy between motivation and activity. The sample illustrates the difference between the employers' and the employees' motives for getting a job done. Thirty men are 'pickers', the employees. Their job is taking orders, organising a clear path through the warehouse for the forklift to access the items, putting them on a pallet, and delivering them to the loading dock that will allow them to be loaded efficiently onto the trucks. This description is an example of the operational level of their activity system. However, if the same activity is looked at from a motivational level, two distinct processes are revealed. From the employers point of view, the success of the business is dependent upon the 'pickers' speed and skill in completing orders. However, from the point of view of the employee, a successful day includes not doing an injury to his back, staying on friendly terms with colleagues and having enough time to take a break.

Drawing on the findings from the data collection, this chapter outlines some of the motives that constitute individual relational dynamics in MA supervision and in turn inform the activity systems of both MA supervisors and supervisees. Let us now listen to some of the participant's voices and compare them to the claims made in the literature review. What do these voices say about the motives that occur in MA supervision?

4.2 Findings from the Data

4.2.1 What Motivates MA Supervisors?

The following section looks at what motivates MA supervisors and how these motives impact upon supervisory practice. This in turn will be contrasted with the MA supervisees motives in order to illustrate the individual relational dynamics at play in the supervisory dyad.

4.2.1.1 Ambiguity and Clarity in Postgraduate Supervisory Practice

The first set of issues arising out of the data concerns the ambiguity associated with postgraduate supervisory practice as experienced by the supervisors themselves. Ambiguity stood out as a major element to be negotiated by MA supervisors, and as a result supervisors were motivated to implement various strategies in order to transform this supervisory ambiguity into clarifiable, or meaningful, elements that in turn informed their professional identity (see figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Motivating Process for MA Supervisors

The term 'ambiguity' emerged organically from the data, and the concept comes with a rich philosophical and educational underpinning. Merleau-Ponty argues that "ambiguity is of the essence of human existence, and everything we live or think has always several meanings" (1962/1945: 169). Ambiguity, from a philosophical viewpoint, initiates

alternative ways to know, act and be that are interlinked with how we locate our being in the world. Analogously, ambiguity from an MA supervisory perspective can be similarly understood as enabling a developmental generative process, that provides supervisors with opportunities for re-thinking assumptions and re-working supervisory strategies that increase effectivity and how the educational process is thought of and valued. These insights, have been recently applied to the areas of education and professionalism by Gloria Dall'Alba (2009), who reframes professional education as a process of becoming. She identifies these processes as "ambiguities of learning", which entails a transformation of the self over a period of time. This runs contrary to the accepted models of supervision as pedagogy and effective supervision that were discussed in Chapter 2 (Literature Review), where this process was conceived as evolving in an easy to recognize, stage-by-stage sequence (Reidy & Green, 2005; Englebretson et al., 2008). That said, a key commonality in all of these arguments is the stress laid upon the importance of clarifying meaning and rationale for professional practice.

While there is wide agreement about the need for professional practice within postgraduate supervision, the meaning and significance of this is contested. Two of the broadest contending explanations concerning academic professional practice are those of expertise and risk management. Arguments organised around the principle of professionalism have emphased mentoring relationships and in some cases, the need to possess certain skills and competencies needed to forge out an academic career.

It emerged from the data that effective supervisors, especially those in the Human Sciences, are seen as being accountable for their actions, having frequent and well-defined meetings, and giving feedback that is both constructive and timely. In these accounts, the drive towards professionalisation has resulted in academic supervision becoming more complex and skilled. Academic knowledge has been become synonymous with professional expertise. Within the area of MA supervision, the supervisor is held accountable for both their academic knowledge expertise as well as their expertise at controlling, monitoring and contributing to the information relayed to their supervisee. This is what McWilliam (2004) terms the "risk-consciousness" of the

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postgraduate supervisor. Within the Irish Higher Education context, this was found to be both an emerging reality and a point of departure from traditional modes of supervision.

A second line of argument is broadly derived from Beck's (1992) concept of a risk society. This argument highlights major trends towards risk management. In these accounts, the supervisor's work is portrayed as becoming a risk event and guided by the 'precautionary principle' (Pellizzoni & Ylonen, 2008). More than this, it is claimed that supervisor's work has become increasingly litigious, with supervisors expected to supply evidence of supervisory contact and comply with institutional demands. Under this view, professionalism is a necessary defense, a strategy for surviving within a risk-adverse institution. However, as we shall see, it also has an effect upon how supervisees orientate themselves towards the supervisory relationship.

The word 'ambiguity' repeatedly arose as a descriptive and relevant term throughout the data collection process and as a result was used as an illustrative concept in the data analysis. It needs to be stressed that the term 'ambiguity' as discussed below is rooted in an investigation into MA supervision and should not be understood as being emblematic of all Higher Educational processes. It was found that MA supervisors were motivated to develop strategies to deal with the ambiguity associated with MA supervision in order to clarify meaning and rationale, which in turn lead to the development of a professional supervisor identity (see figure 4.1). This emerged as a continual reiterative process that spanned the duration of each individual supervisory relationship. Three types of ambiguity were recognized by MA supervisors as being key motivating factors in the Supervisor-Supervisee relationship at MA level. These are: *Situational Ambiguity; Quality Ambiguity;* and *Subjective Ambiguity* (see table 4.1 and figure 4.2).

Table 4.1: Three Types of Ambiguity in the MA Supervisory Relationship

Three Types of Ambiguity in the MA Supervisory Relationship	
Situational Ambiguity	The ambiguity of integrating the student into the research culture
Quality Ambiguity	The ambiguity about what constitutes best supervisory practice
Subjective Ambiguity	An internal ambiguity for supervisors about what compromises a professional academic identity
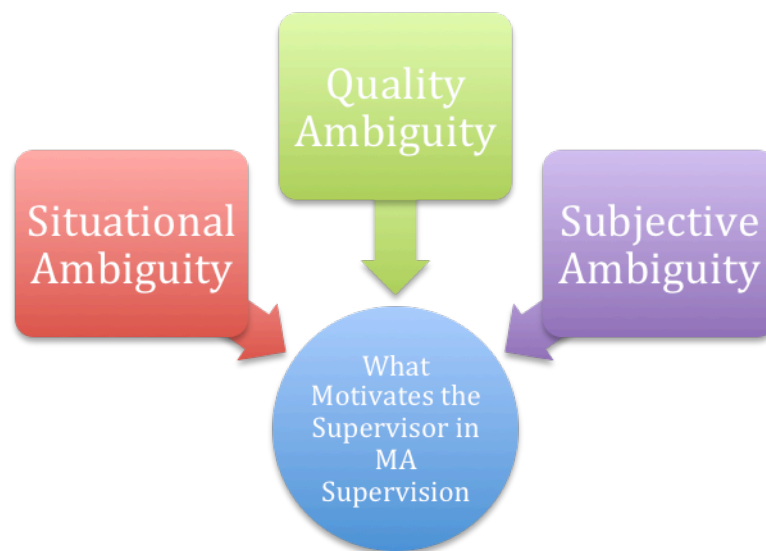
Figure 4.2: What motivates the Supervisor in MA Supervision

4.2.1.2 Situational Ambiguity

The *situational* type of ambiguity concerns the ambiguity of integrating the student into the research culture, which is located in the beginning stages of the research process. This was described by a MA by research supervisor interviewed as "the muddy waters" stage, where the student is being guided through the various aspects involved in the production of a postgraduate dissertation. In order to deal with the ambiguity of this stage, this supervisor put in place a "semi-structured plan" to clarify for both supervisor and supervisee the various timelines for the completion of work where:

by Christmas, she would have a skeleton first draft of her literature review…
Then, what I would see is, after Christmas we would get going on her
methodology chapter, which will be informed by her literature review. From then
on we will put in place some form of action plan on how best to carry out this
research (Clara, MA Supervisor).

Others involved in Taught Masters programmes also echoed the idea that an MA
supervisor should act as a guide for their students, and strategically plan their
supervisee's progression. In fact the planning element was given a more acute importance
in the Taught Masters, due to time limitations on the production of a thesis, and the
possession of this ability is seen to be a necessary skill for successful supervision:

Guiding of them through the kind of science [of doing research], if you want to
call it that, of how to do what they are supposed to be doing but also letting the
research show an element of guiding in a sense, as opposed to encouraging,
making suggestions and reassuring to some extent (Dylan, MA Supervisor).

The effects of situational ambiguity were areas of concern for all supervisors, especially
in terms of supervisee motivation and their anxiety about integrating into a research
culture. Repeatedly writing skills, the practicalities of doing a library search and
providing the correct referencing conventions were listed by the supervisors as primary
concerns that a supervisee may have. Although the anxieties may be academic, the
supervisors' way of dealing with them were explicitly personal.

Primarily, I am trying to take a constructivist type of approach [to supervision],
whereby I ask: "Who is this person? What can I build on here? Do I know exactly
where this learner is at? What is weighing her down?" Instead of saying "Well
this is what you must do" (Clara, MA Supervisor).

From the above quote, it can be recognised that academic work is seen as an extension of
the personal, albeit tempered by academic norms and conventions. This was to become a
recurring theme in my interviews with both MA supervisors and supervisees, where the
idea that the production of a research extended beyond writing style and the meeting of
deadlines and was often described as having a life altering impact.

Oh it entirely changes your life in some way, if you get, if you're on the right programme, it will change your life... [supervision starts] with the person, and figuring out what's best for them in their lives and their career… there needs to be a reason ... for it. You must start with the person in front of you. The student (Caroline, MA Supervisor).

Here we witness the idea that the experience of supervision in some way has a transformative effect upon academic identity, an effect that occurs on both the personal and professional level. Yet as we shall see in a later section, this same experience can be perceived as a risk event for students, where they feel that they risk their self-concept of themselves as learners being valued or undermined (McWilliam et al., 2008). There is an underlying anxiety attached to embarking on any period of study, which stems from the newness of the experience. The student is constantly asking himself or herself "Is this correct?" "Am I doing this right?" "Is this wrong?" These anxieties were also mirrored in how the MA supervisors were motivated to clarify the ambiguity associated with best supervisory practice: a quality ambiguity.

4.2.1.3 Quality Ambiguity

The changing composition of the Masters degree over the last number of years has lead to a *quality ambiguity* about what constitutes best supervisory practice and who is made accountable for the quality of research produced, especially given the ongoing restructuring of Irish Higher Education. For the purposes of this study, I will use Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005) definition of quality teaching to illustrate what is meant by quality ambiguity in MA supervisory practice. This definition refers to three categories of practice: logical, psychological and moral acts. Logical acts refer to pedagogical activities such as " defining, demonstrating, explaining correcting and interpreting. The psychological acts encompass such things as motivating, encouraging, rewarding, punishing, planning and evaluating" (2005: 195). Whereas the moral acts of teaching include the teacher both exhibiting and fostering "such moral traits as honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, respect and fairness" (2005: 195). These three elements can be found in the accounting practices of MA supervisors. Accountability for what transpires in postgraduate supervision has lead to an increased amount of accounting

practices for both supervisors and their supervisees, such as record templates for supervision sessions and the keeping of files of electronic corrections given out to students. These accounting practices can be viewed as an attempt to quantify the amount of work done in supervisory sessions. Although one would assume that these accounting practices would be instigated by formal Higher Education policy, this was found not to be the case with the accounting practices coming from supervisors themselves and feeding into their own identity as professional academics:

> *I find minuting the meetings is the best thing because there is no ambiguity then, there's nobody saying "Oh, I never remember you saying that". And on these minuted things I have recommended readings. I have like you know for example by a note this is where you go ... many different pieces of the jigsaw to try and help them to get the skills to get it (Caroline, MA Supervisor).*

Accountability in MA supervision moves beyond form-filling and paperwork, with the accounting practices being more of an accounting for what is being done, has been done, and is intended to be done, for the benefit of supervisees, supervisors and institutional or departmental review panels as seen in the following statements related to the keeping of records of supervision sessions.

> *[An MA supervisor is showing me a supervision template that she asks her supervisees to fill out]*
> *It's like ehm, look literally what the ... the top section of it is to do with the dates that they'd ... so in other words by this date I want this this this this, and we talk about the title and then we break down for example whatever the focus is for the next time we're going to meet. For the literature review, what are the key areas of the literature review I want and what are the wordages for each of those. Eh so that they ... my belief is that you plan backwards to implement forwards. You need to give them a picture of what I'm looking for and exactly what's needed at each point of that (Caroline, MA Supervisor).*

> *I tend to set tasks, you know, achievable tasks, but it's in consultation with the person and I suppose I redirect it back to the student by saying: "Ok, where would you like to go from here or where do you see your work going from here" you know? (Clara, MA Supervisor).*

Accounting practices also extend to the saving of electronically corrected versions of supervisee's work, and can also be read as having an educational value.

I find that a kind of two-tier thing works best, where if the student submits work electronically, we mark it up electronically and insert comments, send it back to the student, but then meet with a print out and you can go through and explain why you've made the suggestions you have. I think after the initial meeting, or unless there's a very specific problem, it's much more constructive if the supervisor has read the work and there's a copy that people can look at (Dylan, MA Supervisor).

Drawing upon the sentiments found above, it could be argued that the role that accountability plays in creating professional academic identity would be misrepresented if it were portrayed as a product of a risk-adverse organization (McWilliam, 2004). Instead the accounting practices of supervisors can be seen as being geared towards maximising their supervisees' progression through their Masters by making clear the work that has been done and the work that needs to be done, rather than springing from self-protective motives of the individual supervisor. However, the self-protective motive cannot be dismissed altogether as evidenced in the following piece of transcript:

Dylan (MA supervisor): I like keeping the paper trail as I would say, which I wouldn't have thought about a few years ago, em, but yes it [anxiety over litigation] is an issue. The appeals board here, in this University anyway, almost always takes the student's side and if the student takes an appeal, they will almost always be successful… There's a board and, em, the supervisor is never contacted.

Interviewer: Mmm, ok, there's simply almost a power drain from the supervisor.

Dylan: Yes, there can be, there can be because the University itself has different ideas of education. They try to forestall everything before it even happens […] I think that there has been a shift more to the American model where the students are clients, you know, and we are the providers.

The above quote echoes McWilliam's (2005) insights into how risk and knowledge production are conceived of in Higher Education. Namely, the dismissal by HE of the personal and emotional components that operate within educational relationships, which although may be more bureaucratically successful, also serves to create a trust deficit between workers and the organization (Alaszenski and Brown, 2007).

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Dylan also recognizes the cultural shift that has occurred in HE, and how this change in culture has in turn affected how supervisors orientate themselves towards postgraduate supervision. Recently in the UK, there has been a major drive by both politicians and industrialists to ensure that Higher Education is motivated by economic imperatives. This is echoed in the Irish context, where the recent Hunt report entitled 'A National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' argues that Higher Education should serve national economic development (2011: 30). This is made explicit in the final 'high level objective' of the report:

> *The policy framework for higher education will make national expectations clear. The objectives and operations of the institutions and those of the funding and quality agencies will be mutually aligned, and will be underpinned by a sustainable funding model and clearly defined structures for system governance and accountability (2011: 27).*

Roberts (2001) and others argue that the introduction of changes in Higher Education related to national economic needs, are primarily brought about by the commodification of knowledge through the process of codification. Higher Educational institutions are increasingly introducing mechanisms that measure the provision of knowledge and skills in order to meet the demands of both industrial and governmental interests. Through the implementation of such mechanisms, a shift in emphasis occurs away from content and more towards the actual provision of skills and knowledge (Roberts, 2001). Paralleling ideas forwarded by cognitive psychology and perhaps mirroring the technological developments in our culture, Higher Education has increasingly become obsessed with three areas of knowledge acquisition - skills, competencies and process learning - that has lead to the popular conception of the student as an "information-processing machine" (Robins & Webster, 1999: 190). This move away from the more relational aspects associated with the master-apprentice model of academic supervision has caused supervisors to question what role they play in supervision and results in a particular subjective type of ambiguity that, as we shall see in the following section, motivates supervisors to behave in a particular way.

4.2.1.4 Subjective Ambiguity

The ambiguity that accompanies MA supervision does not always clearly emanate from external sources. Many of the associated ambiguities seem to come from within the supervisor's themselves and be linked to what they themselves perceive to be a professional academic identity. The internal impetus behind this ambiguity concerns how a MA supervisor should best position themselves in the supervisory relationship as there are no clear or set guidelines concerning optimal supervision practice currently in place. Ambiguity stemming from working identity has previously been theorized as arising from an uncertainty about what should be accomplished in a given job (Kahn et al, 1964; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1982; Chang & Hancock, 2003) but as we shall see the subjective ambiguity in MA supervision is qualitatively different.

An interesting finding that arose in the course of this research was that in order to deal with the subjective ambiguity associated with MA supervision, supervisors tend to put in place certain, to borrow Foucault's (1988) term, "practices of the self", whereby they employ certain methods and techniques ("tools") to compose a supervisory role for them to play. These practices of the self were found to be subjective processes through which postgraduate supervisors produce and define a highly personal ethical self-understanding of what it means to introduce a student into an academic research culture. Subjective ambiguity can also be allied with the processes of subjectification that occur in academic work (Oakley, 2008). Subjectification can be understood as arising out of the specific processes that inform human existence in the interactions that occur between people and their environment (Foucault, 1988). It has been recently theorized that subjectification encompasses much more than just the positioning of the social actor between the intersection of meaning and practice; it has been argued that subjectification also embodies the need to make sense, through subjective reorganization, of the conduct of both oneself and others (Hildebrand-Nilshon et al., 2001). This was very saliently seen in the data. Within MA supervision, the most common vehicle for practices of the self is "professional development". However, what is defined as professional development in postgraduate supervision is different to the type of professional development found in

other professions, as it is much more of a subjective reflective process than a process involving formal skills training. This is shown in the following piece of transcript:

> *I would see in my role as supervisor that it would be more about my own self-reflection on the process, you know? How can I better myself? And I suppose what would be extremely helpful in that sense, given those circumstances, is perhaps an inquiry portfolio into is there something I can identify with that's problematic in my supervision… So, certainly, I would see that as an ongoing form of professional development, for me! (Clara, MA Supervisor).*

All of the postgraduate supervisors interviewed seem to place enormous importance on the role played by professional development in their supervisory practice. They constantly reflect upon their practice and take every opportunity to better the way they supervise and update their technological skill sets. What stood out from the data collected was the amount of enthusiasm, drive and commitment exhibited by all involved. They did not appear to need direction or input from the academic organisation to motivate them in their quest. The motivating force that drove these supervisors came from themselves.

Part of the reason for this phenomenon may be found in the supervisor's own experience of being mentored when they themselves were being supervised or being tutored in supervisory practice during the initial stages of their career. Narrative case studies of the role played mentoring or tutoring practice in the formation of academic career paths by Parker and Scott (2010) have indicated that having a collaborative mentorship with a more experienced academic is vital for the navigation of obstacles associated with assimilating into a research culture. Postgraduate supervisors tend to be more aware of these obstacles, as they themselves have personal experience of them. It was found that this awareness was further heightened by the fact that their experience of doing research was felt to be transformative and consequently life-changing (as doing research has become an integral part of their work life), an aspect that they attempt to communicate through their supervisory practice. Consequently, it may be surmised that there is a strong vocational element at play in the supervisor role. As one supervisor puts it:

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The other thing [the person who has supervised me] has done, and I do this with all my students, is the opportunities as well. It's almost as if she is so far up the ladder herself, she's like there, it does not matter to her, and even   when she was only nearly there... she will pull you up the ladder... she will introduce you to the right people... she will write with you... all of these things I'm doing the same with mine… So, I've applied for funding for some of my students, any opportunity that I can see for them, if they, if I think they have it I want their name out there... for their own benefit... Its more their, their benefit to see, to see that they will succeed (Caroline, MA Supervisor).

The professionalism associated with MA supervision was defined and understood in such diffuse terms that it became difficult, indeed impossible to classify with any absolute certainty. However, the data did throw some light on the idea that professionalism in postgraduate supervision operates on a dialectical model of give and take between the supervisor and the supervisee. This finding also revealed that for MA supervisors, the starting point of the postgraduate journey for the student comes from a personal rather than an academic source. In contrast to the overwhelming accent given to skill acquisition in the supervision literature, here the locus for the development of an academic identity is premised on the personal rather than the technical co-option of the supervisee into the research culture. The MA supervisors I interviewed, when describing the initial stages of a supervisee's introduction to postgraduate research reiterated again and again the need to start from the personal.

I mean primarily, we really would have kicked off our [initial] conversation with saying "What are your worries?" "What are your concerns?" I suppose taking me *more of a mentoring role really around that. Her number one concern was certainly 'Is this possible?' (Clara, MA Supervisor).*

This [supervisee] who just walked out there, ehm very accomplished, very organised himself, very well organised person so liked ... likes structure, ehm. Just I knew from talking to him, even the way he was taking down the stuff that he is highly organised. This is how he operates so, I now have a good handle on how he is. I know, you know the background in terms of his own teaching, very bright, all these different things, so I've it all kind of sussed. And sussed out exactly what he needs (Caroline, MA Supervisor).

You [are] trying to build confidence so they end up with a piece of work they are proud of. That's the thing. (Dylan, MA Supervisor).

On some taught Masters programmes, personal logs and reflective practice have become part of the curriculum, which goes someway towards valuing the role that subjectivity and reflection play in the composition of a piece of research.

> *Well one of the things that they have to do as part of the preparing for research module is to compile a research journal, which is a kind of ongoing log in terms of what they have done. They can bring in outside things; if they have been to see a film for instance in their own time that has intercepted with the topic that we have looked at and they can talk about that… We found that last year [because of the journaling] most people had come up with their thesis topic much earlier in the year than had been the case before (Dylan, MA Supervisor).*

The time and effort that these postgraduate supervisors commit to their own professional development and supervision comes not so much from reluctant compliance with external demands as from dedication to doing the best job possible and seeing their supervisees succeed. It may be argued that his subjectively motivated dedication seems to be grounded in what Nias (1981/1996) calls professional and vocational commitments, namely commitments that are grounded in the kinds of meanings and purposes that educators attach to their work. It would be blatantly remiss, and perhaps theoretically presumptuous, to dismiss these strategies for dealing with the ambiguities associated with MA supervision and their related consequences as just belonging to a pattern of academic employment that misrecognises and illegitimates the personal and subjective elements at play in academic supervision.

These strategies for dealing with supervisory ambiguity point to the need for important re-evaluations of the current theories on the motives that underlie postgraduate supervision. However, the same caution can be applied to the data reported here. In certain respects, professionalism may be an important motivating factor in the work of the supervisors I have studied. But this does not mean that all that is claimed as being professional supervision practice can be explained as purely subjective orientations. The motivations that drive postgraduate supervisors cannot be explained away quite so easily.

The ambiguious nature of MA supervision and how it is negotiated by supervisors, I have argued, has not been formally recognised, not adequately acknowledged or determined by both writers and researchers in the area. This chapter highlights the absurdity of presuming that academic professional identity is completely defined by expertise and risk-consciousness (McWilliam, 2005). It encourages us to peer over the parapets of ivory towerism and view MA supervision as a contextualised human relationship, influenced by affective and relational elements. If the culture of MA supervision were to be re-framed in this way, we would come to recognise that within the ambiguity of the supervisory experience there lies the seeds for the creative re-imagining of academic identity. This raises further questions, not just about the culture of MA supervision, but also about the underlying motivating forces that inform the supervisees' perspective– the subject of the next section.

4.2.2 What Motivates MA Supervisees?

In the last section, I outlined some of the motives that motivate supervisors in MA supervision. But this is only half the story - how do supervisees' perceive MA supervision? This section attempts to redress the balance by letting the supervisees' voice be heard. Although supervisors tend to define the supervisory relationship as a professional educational contract, the findings from this study indicate that MA supervisees primarily see the ambiguity of supervision as being clarified through the relationship being conceived of as a psychological contract characterized by boundaries between themselves and their supervisor.

It is only within the last number of years that attention has been given to psychological boundaries and as a result research on the concept is not yet the preserve of one particular discipline. Specific theories related to psychological boundaries are social identity theory (Jaspal & Yampolsky, 2011), self-categorization theory (Reid, Palomares, Anderson, & Bondad-Brown, 2009), social cognitive theory (Chisholm-Burns & Spivey, 2010), and systems theory ('Stell' Kefalas, 2011). Psychological boundaries outline the remit or extent of something, the limit of a subject, object or activity (Jaspal & Yampolsky, 2011).

Analogously, the psychological boundaries found within MA supervision appear to define the limits of the self, relationships, academic activity and the ambiguity associated with research practice.

The purpose of this section is to address an oversight in the topic under investigation and to give an account of how MA supervision as understood from the student perspective. This viewpoint is missing from the majority of the literature on postgraduate supervision and often results an overemphasis on the role of the supervisor to the detriment of the role played by the postgraduate supervisee. The nature of the responses given by the MA supervisees is at variance to the responses of the supervisors as outlined in the previous section, but as we shall see these differences in opinion leads to an interesting reinterpretation of the relational dynamics found in postgraduate supervision..

4.2.2.1 MA Supervisees and Boundaries

For MA supervisees, boundaries characterise the psychological contract of supervision. Boundary-making emerged from the data as playing a key role in MA supervisees' understanding of MA supervision and how they sought to clarify the ambiguities felt to be present in the supervisory relationship. These boundaries are laid down to give structure to the postgraduate process. They serve to protect a supervisee's personal sense of self, whereas at the same time enabling a student to create an academic identity for themselves (see figure 4.3). However, although these boundaries are constructed in the form of a "safety net" for supervisees' personal sense of self, as we shall come to see these boundaries are not immune to being transversed, stretched and even broken.
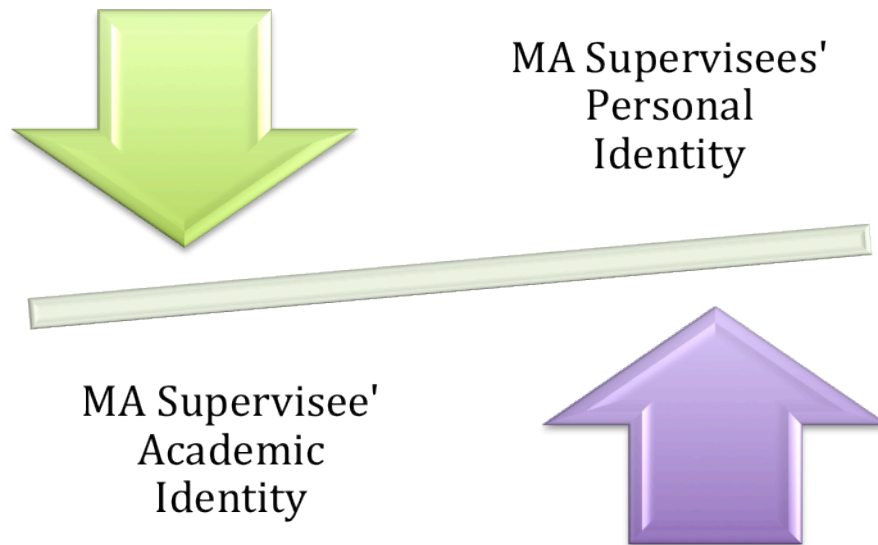
Figure 4.3: MA Supervisees' construct Boundaries between Personal and Academic Identities

In the literature review (Chapter 2), one of the eleven characteristics of effective supervision outlined by Englebretson (2008) was Boundary Definition. Boundaries emerged as a repeated theme in the data collected from MA supervisees. Boundary definition is a defining factor in both the perceived quality of the supervisory relationship, but is also a predictor of successful research completion (Scevak et al., 2001). It has been theorized that what constitutes the boundaries of supervision are defined differently by both the supervisor and supervisee, with the supervisor placing emphasis upon the academic elements of research and the research candidates focusing upon the personal relationship and the extent to which the supervisor guides their work (Spear, 2000; Johnson & Broda, 1996).

Within the literature on educational mentoring, there has traditionally been a divide between the functional and personal construction of knowledge. This can be witnessed in contexts where educational practices stimulated by professional institutional practices are deemed to be functional and educational practices that evolve out of personal relationships are seen to be "much more reflexive, much more informing of, and informed by, relationships" (Fielding, 1996: 4). In contrast to this, for both the supervisors and supervisees interviewed, MA supervision entails a co-construction of

knowledge, where the two parties collaborate in an effort to create an academic piece of work. Co-constructed knowledge implies participants engaging in a dialogical approach to learning, where all parties feel that their contributions are equally valued (Hargreaves, 2010). However, there is dissent in the ranks over how this construction comes about, as Shepard (1991:8) explains:

> *Students take in information, interpret it, connect it to what they already know, and if necessary, reorganize their mental structures to accommodate new understandings. Learners construct and then reconstruct mental models that organize ideas and their interrelation.*

In this sense, the educational practices that are associated with postgraduate supervision can be understood as a fusion or synthesis of personal and professional identities. In the literature there is a tendency to advocate for either a strict division between personal and professional identities in supervision (Hargreaves, 2010; Grant, 2010; Severinsson & Sand, 2010) or a synthesis argument where identities become hybridized, merged or synthesized (Conn et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2011; Chong, 2010; Dahan, 2007; Bartlett, 2011; Manathunga, 2011). In this chapter, I will propose a third way of understanding supervisory dynamics which highlights the important, but neglected role of boundaries in the construction of academic identities.

This third way can be best elucidated through the concept of boundary objects. Boundary objects tend to exemplify artifacts enabling the boundary crossing by providing a bridging function (Star, 1989). An example of a boundary object in the context of MA supervision would be the written work (chapters or supervision record templates) that a supervisee submits to their supervisor, this enabling the feedback from supervisors and the mapping of academic development by the supervisee. Boundary objects are defined as objects that:

> *[B]oth inhabit several intersecting worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them… [They are] both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in*

common use, and become strongly structured in individual site use. (Star & Griesemer, 1989: 393 cited in Akkerman & Bakker, 2011: 134)

I argue that nuances of MA supervision can be better understood if one recognizes the importance of boundaries in the relationship. This is especially true if we adopt the supervisee's perspective, who experiences a very tangible crossing of personal and professional boundaries and is highly emotionally invested in the boundary object, namely the MA thesis.

Boundaries by their very nature are ambigious (Wenger, 1998; Landa, 2008). The very liminality of MA supervision for the supervisee holds multiple possibilities, but also holds many hazards. Narrative accounts of both groups and individuals who cross boundaries pay credence to the fact that boundaries both act as a bridge between worlds, while simultaneously positioning themselves as the division between related worlds. Persons who find themselves transversing the boundaries find themselves in two positions. On the positive side, they may find themselves to be in a coveted position where they can draw on one discipline to the advantage of another. However, on the negative side, their position may be faught with difficulty since being on the periphery they may be seen as alien to both practices and never belong to or be accepted by either one (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011: 140). This is the space in which supervisees find themselves. It is how supervisees negotiate the ambiguous position at the boundary between the 'real world" (consisting of work, friends and family) and the world of the MA (consisting of writing, researching, and supervisory meetings) that will be the focus of this section.

It emerged from the data analysis that supervisees were motivated to erect three types of boundary within MA supervision: Relationship, Power, and Performance boundaries (see table 4.2 and figure 4.4). These boundaries were used by MA supervisees in two ways: to structure their identities as academic researchers and define this identity as being distinct from their non-academic identities (also see table 4.1).

Table 4.2: Types of Boundaries erected by MA Supervisees

Types of Boundaries erected by MA Supervisees	
Relationship Boundaries	Boundaries related to the formal professional relationship between the MA supervisor and supervisee.
Power Boundaries	Boundaries between the expert/professional knowledge system of the supervisor and the personal knowledge system of the supervisee
Performance Boundaries	Boundaries between the performance of academic identity and the living of personal identity
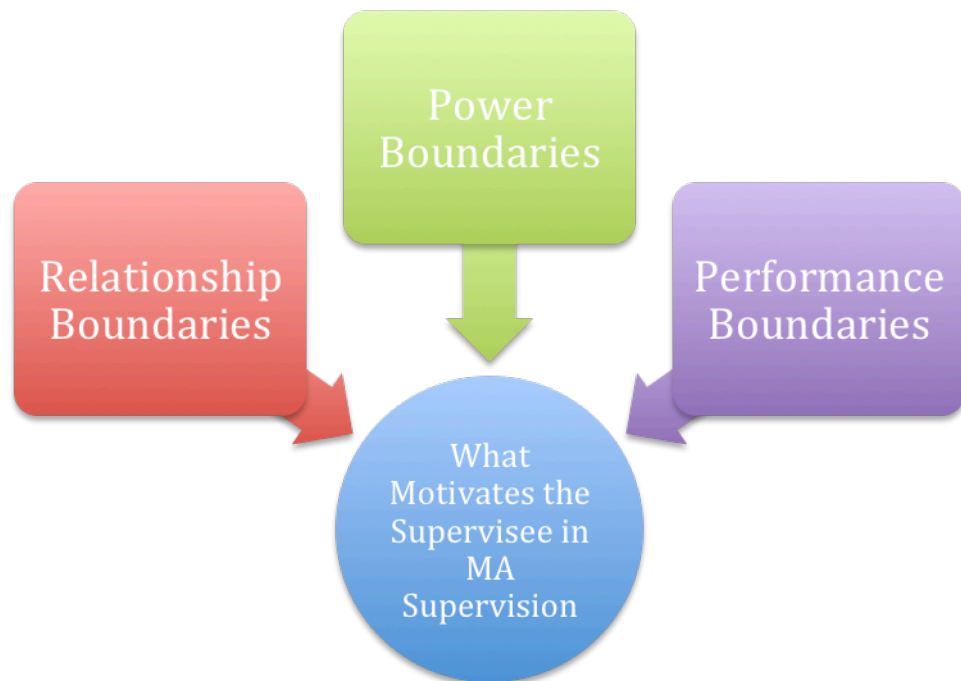
Figure 4.4: What Motivates the Supervisee in MA Supervision

4.2.2.2 Relationship Boundaries

The first of these boundaries relates to the supervisor-supervisee relationship itself. For supervisees, supervision was framed as a professional relationship that distanced itself from other relationships by formal procedures, conformity to institutional norms and respect for the supervisor's status within the HE organisation. It has been repeatedly

shown that the momentum behind MA supervision is dependant upon the relationship that is formed between the supervisor and the supervisee (Manathunga, 2005; James & Baldwin, 1999; Taylor and Beasley, 2005; Reidy & Green, 2005). How supervisors understand this relationship is well documented in the literature, and was the subject of the previous section. But how do MA supervisees view the supervisory relationship?

Within the literature and policy documents on postgraduate supervision there is a general consensus that sees mentoring as the most effective supervision strategy, but framing supervision in this way distracts from the underlying power dynamics at play within the relationship (Manathunga, 2007). This is a dangerous and uncomfortable subject matter for an academic to investigate as it unsettles constructed 'safe' identities and throws established practice into a state of flux, this may go some way towards explaining the lack of postgraduate student voice represented in the literature. MA students attempt to waylay the discomfort of these power dynamics by contrasting the professional relationship found in supervision with their experiences of 'real-life' relationships. As Simon, an MA supervisee states: *"I think that she'd be closer to seeing me as a peer"*. However, this peer-like collegiality is tempered by an acute awareness of the power that his supervisor possesses.

> *She cares and she's professional and you know and it would be reciprocated you know, I wouldn't even dream of messing her about, you know I wouldn't… I would be more conscious of not letting her down or not doing anything that might insult her in any way. (Simon, MA supervisee)*

Echoing the findings from the MA supervisors, the idea that supervision is as a professional relationship was consistent in all the student responses and this implies a certain element of formality and conformity to agreed institutional standards. An illuminating contrast emerges in Louise's case, as she was friends with her supervisor before embarking on her MA.

> *I suppose even our meetings now are nice and informal and frequent. It is more nearly I don't feel like there is somebody over me, it's more of like…a team*

(laughs). But I'm not sure should it be that informal, should it be? (Louise, MA Supervisee)

It is as if two worlds collided, the personal and professional, only the result was far from catastrophic. In fact the relationship was described as being more supportive because it had its origin in the confidential world of friendship. The above quote clearly shows that the personal and the professional comfortably co-exist in MA supervision, which raises questions about the validity of the personal/professional division that exists in the supervision literature. It can be argued that the concept of the personal/professional divide in postgraduate supervision has its origins in the sociological theory of an ideological division existing between the public and private spheres (Habermas, 1989). Just because there is a division between public and private spheres in other areas of education, for example in second level (Beijaard et al., 2004), does not necessarily imply that this is the case for postgraduate supervision, or indeed Higher Education as a whole.

In the supervision as mentoring literature, postgraduate supervisors use the supervisory relationship to facilitate the supervisees' journey through the research process by using emphatic dialogue and the modeling of accepted discipline-specific research behaviours. By doing this, the supervisor can socialize students into a research culture, enable them to realize their career goals and scaffold their emotional and intellectual development (Pearson & Brew, 2002). However, positing supervision as mentoring obscures the obvious role hierarchy plays in the relationship and overlooks Devos' (2004) claim that mentoring is a powerful form of normalization and a site of governmentality. Could this also apply to MA supervision?

> *Interviewer: What do you want out of say a successful supervision?*
>
> *Simon (MA supervisee): Ehm I want to be led. Maybe not to where I wanna go. I don't want to be led ehm...*
>
> *Interviewer: Down the garden path?*

Simon (MA supervisee): I also want to be told that ehm this is a crap idea, don't do it. Ehm and I think I'm getting that, she's saying that's good going and again it's not that I'm, we're all capable of independent thought. I know too and I recognise that I need that my ideas need to be channelled you know. And ehm it's been good so far, yeah. So being led, I would say being led, being channelled.

Interviewer: Are you stimulated in some way?

Simon (MA supervisee): I would say stimulated perhaps yeah but I would say more than anything I am reassured, ehm that I am on the right path more or less, you know slight nudge here, slight nudge there, that my general trajectory is right, you know.

Although some MA students attempt to erect a psychological boundary between their personal and academic/professional selves, this is an artificial separation that cannot hold. Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson (2006: 17-18) describe the pedagogies in postgraduate supervision as text work/identity work which occur "through dialogue, writing and experience". I would go one step further and claim that the student moulds the self into the activity of research through their the act of writing itself *and their conceptualization of the supervisory relationship*. The personal and professional are the mobius strip of postgraduate supervision both melding into the same experience. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> *There's both [personal and professional development in doing an MA] because I think ehm it just definitely it brings you on as a person. Any challenge that you can meet and you can you know face and deal with, I do think it's a good thing and ehm you know just it's the rigor, just the whole practice (Simon, MA supervisee)*

This is a noteworthy facet of postgraduate learning, it is as if a smudge has occurred between two senses of self, the personal and the academic self. The boundaries that exist between these two identities are not static entities, but are dynamic spaces where people are opened up to a new identity of the 'would-be- known'.

> *I suppose it depends on why you are doing it in the first place. If you are driven by the letters after the name that probably would keep you going but if it is a*

personal thing then it's an achievement to keep going and to just further your academic work for yourself. (Louise, MA supervisee)

Boundaries tend to be understood as existing between two or more sites and being categorized as static entities (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Yet, this sense of stasis is not coming across in the data. What is emerging is the experience of supervision for MA students implies negotiating a move from one identity to another. This sense of movement can be best conceptualized through Winnicott's (1975) idea of the transitional space used to describe the intermediate area of human experience between inner reality and the outside world. Ellsworth (2005: 149) applies this to learning experience:

> *The experience of the learning self is simultaneously the experience of what I shall have become by what I am in the process of learning and the experience of what I shall have learned by the process of what I am becoming.*

However, this is only one way of viewing this phenomenon. I will now turn to another way of understanding the boundaries in supervision. There is also a shadow side to supervisory practice, which will be brought to light in the following section.

4.2.2.3 Power Boundaries

I suppose me to show to Clara (supervisor), obviously she recommends that I should maybe have something done, she knows best. Y'know it is my first time doing it so she is the expert, this is her area and there is a reason why she is suggesting to look here and maybe to have it done like this or maybe try it out like this. (Louise, MA supervisee)

Within MA supervisory contexts, two different knowledge systems come together, the expert/professional knowledge system of the supervisor and the personal knowledge of the MA student (Mylopoulos & Reehr, 2007). However, value and symbolic capital is given to the expert knowledge system, thus creating a particular power dynamic (Hargreaves & Hopper, 2006; Burri, 2008). That said it would be unfair to assume that because there is a power dynamic at play that the relationship needs to be defined as completely exploitative.

If we view the phenomenon of postgraduate supervision from a situationalist perspective, the traditional Marxist understanding of power (Eldred, 2011) becomes illuminated differently. Echoing the idea of a personal/professional mobius strip informing knowledge production in postgraduate supervision, Dall'Alba (2009) argues that learning to become a professional involves not only an integration of knowing and acting, but also a process of being. Similarly, MA supervision is not a grand abstract theoretical construct, nor does it exist on a distant conceptual plane, it actually exists in the real world. For many academics and MA students, the act of MA supervision is embedded in and part of the world of experience. Perhaps because of its "average everydayness" it has been taken for granted and overlooked as a valid research topic. However, this overlooks the fact that MA supervision is, to paraphrase Heidegger (1962/1927), a mode of knowing and is essentially a way of being human. If we start our inquiry from this human element, rather than conceiving of the MA process as a grand political narrative imposed from above, power boundaries can be conceived as not only containing and limiting learner identity, but also as enabling students to understand their identities as learners as being imbued with possibility, or possible ways to be. However, it emerged from the data that this was dependent upon how supervisees positioned themselves in relation to the power dynamics in MA supervision.

> *And there is kind of an implied humility I would say in doing any course. Ehm and so you have to be willing to listen, to take on board, to accept that this person knows more than you. (Simon, MA supervisee)*

Here humility is described by Simon as a choice to be made when embarking on any course of study. It is not a forced positioning. In fact, it may be theorized as being part of the sharing of power in MA supervision. If power is defined as being linked to the concept of 'gain', then those with power gain control over a resource, then the MA supervisee is utilizing humility as a strategy for gaining knowledge as a resource for use in their academic writing. Humility can also be read as a psychological boundary, which reinforces learner identity and protects against role ambiguity (Tunc & Kutanis, 2009). Yet, the MA student can only afford to employ humility as a power boundary only if there is a strong personable relationship in place between supervisor and supervisee.

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Simon (MA supervisee): I think a lot of it depends too on, there's a lot of how she and I are whatever, whoever you might be dealing with…

I: So the relationship is very important, there is kind of a...?

S: It's a big help, it's a big, big help, and I mean the fact of liking the person. I mean I personally like her, she's warm and that has to help.

I: That helps the process?

S: It does.

A prerequirement for a mutually beneficial relationship is the presence of mutual respect between the two parties.

Faulkner (MA supervisee): She sent me emails now about stuff that I'm interested in, like stuff related to [the research topic], saying oh have a look at this. That side of it is great. That shows that she actually kind of respects your opinion or that she thinks oh he might be interested in this. Even the fact that she thought of you is something kind of quite important.

Interviewer: And the other way around? How do you show respect in supervision?

Faulkner (MA supervisee): I suppose that I don't you know try to talk her down or something. That I am just mannerly and polite I suppose and that I understand that she's actually busy you know and that sort of thing.

Although I might argue that there is a sharing of power in the supervisory relationship, this is just what appears on the surface. In MA supervision, there is a political element, and I hold that it would be overstating the case to claim that the politics of supervision only operates on a macro level, as my analysis shows supervisory politics primarily operate on the micro level so often veiled in the banal corners of supervision meetings.

The merging of the professional and the personal in academic supervision can have unintended consequences. Because learning is such a subjective process, because of the

important role played by the supervisory relationship and because of the mental intensity demanded by academic writing, certain potentially negative relational dynamics may emerge in supervision. These dynamics, although they can be projected onto Higher Education as a whole, are in this research found to operate in the realm of personal politics and serve to inform the psychological contract of supervision from the students' perspective. These personal politics inform motivation and commitment and can be read as a *politics of desire* that inform the direction and nature of the supervisory relationship.

4.2.2.3.1 The Politics of Desire and the Supervisory Gaze

There is a growing literature on how desire is understood and portrayed in educational contexts such as pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1997) poststructuralist research (Usher and Edwards 1994), post-development thought (Saunders 2002) and comparative education (Mehta, 2008). Using desire as an epistemological tool in my analysis allows a revitalized interrogation of MA supervision that moves beyond the traditional canons of education, thus enabling the development of a fresh perspective on the phenomenon under investigation.

Desire has been theorized as being both a negative and an affirmative force (Mehta, 2008), and since antiquity has been always connected with the attainment of knowledge. This is especially true if we take Aristotle's maxim to heart: all men desire to know. Desire in this sense can be conceived as being a site of engagement between the known/familiar and the unknown/strange. This is a pleasurable experience, especially if there is a pre-existing love of learning, a thirst for knowledge and openness to novelty and the unknown (Todd, 1997). This conception is at variance to current primarily negative interpretations of desire inherited from psychoanalytical tradition (Baudrillard, 1983). The apprenticeship model of education, which informs a great deal of the MA supervision literature has a direct lineage back to the Hegelian master-slave relationship. Here desire becomes a life and death struggle because of unequal power relations, where a desire to know the Other and be affirmed in them, ultimately denies the specificity of the Other and attempts to destroy those who embody 'Otherness' (Stronach & MacLure, 1997).

Lacan (1991) forwards the idea that desire arises out of an ontological lack, and that desire is manufactured by 'symbolic castration', meaning an awareness of the lack/loss of the object of desire. This inevitably results in the splitting of sexuality and sex roles, ideas vigorously critiqued by feminism (Kelly, 1997). Although this is an interesting idea, the end result of this theorizing is an unrelenting repetition of desire-fulfillment, with no concrete or disernable realization of a goal or objective and although it has been applied to educational contexts (Gerofsky, 2010) its practical or pragmatic use is open to question.

Foucault (1985) breaks with the dominant idea that desire is grounded in sexuality and duality. He explains desire as being a form of power, and related to the self-selection of suppression, which neatly dovetails with the boundary argument that has emerged in the course of this analysis. The power and self-selection of suppression entails the disciplining the self through the use of distinctive technologies of power, which have a coherent endpoint or a goal of social cohesion and congruent social functioning. Desire for Foucault entails the creation of both new and traditional norms that are influenced by institutional forces that change "the way individuals are led to assign meanings and value to their conduct, their duties, their pleasures, their feelings and sensations, their dreams" (Foucault 1985: 4). Todd (1997) terms this 'learning desire', and highlights how discourse influences a persons' view of the world, their ways of being in that world and dictates what is worthy of desire in that world. This mechanism is clearly evidenced from the supervisees' responses in the form of a desire for position or career and a desire to contribute to the field:

> *Simon (MA supervisee): I suppose I'm open to the idea of perhaps one day applying for a management position.*

> *Interviewer: Ok.*

> *Simon (MA supervisee): And eh, and lately I know that the culture is that you are meant to have this. So ehm I'm doing it now, in the sense that I may never use it*

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but were I able to go for a position I wouldn't like, I wouldn't like not to be selected just because I haven't a course done.

And again.

Interviewer: [What motivates you in your MA?]

Faulkner (MA supervisee): I suppose it's my interest in the topic as well and to ...eh to ehm, possibly to contribute to what work has already been written and to form my own opinions.

Desire and the concept of the gaze are intrinsically linked as evidenced in the literature from neuroscience (Dry et al. 2011), media studies (Pitman, 2009) and social theory (Strick et al, 2008). MA supervisees are acutely aware of the supervisor's gaze. A gaze that is seen to be constantly judging, evaluating, and reacting to the way they intellectually and socially perform on the postgraduate stage. This is most commonly found in the opinion that supervisors appraise the work that the student produces and the value of work is linked to the promptness of feedback. Simon discusses the role played by prompt feedback:

Whether they do or not, it shows that they, it gives the impression again that they rate your work, and ehm if you have concerns as well by email they do deal with them promptly. (Simon, MA supervisee)

The idea of 'gaze' is a term derived from psychoanalytical literature, and is commonly used to describe the anxious feeling that a person experiences once they are aware of being viewed by another person (Lacan, 1978, 1988). The psychological ramifications of the gaze are that the subject, when they realize that they are being observed, loses a part of their autonomy. The gaze is inherently linked to Lacan's (1988) theory of the mirror stage, where a child sees their reflection in a mirror and becomes conscious of the fact that it has an external appearance. Lacan elaborated on this phenomenon and postulated that any object can act as a psychological mirror, in that the awareness of the object serves to remind the viewer that they themselves are also experienced as objects. The gaze does not belong to the subject (the active party's gaze), but rather belongs to the

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object of the gaze. In plain English, the gaze exists in the mind of the person who feels the gaze on them. As Lacan explains:

> *I can feel myself under the gaze of someone whose eyes I do not see, not even discern. All that is necessary is for something to signify to me that there may be others there. This window, if it gets a bit dark, and if I have reasons for thinking that there is someone behind it, is straight-away a gaze (Lacan, 1988, p. 215).*

The notion of the gaze is complicated if viewed through the prism of MA supervision, where there are two parties involved, thus constituting a double gaze. The supervisors' accounting practices and their sense of professionalism towards both the student and the HE organization can be interpreted as symptomatic of this. This has not gone amiss from the student's point of view:

> *I think there is huge pressure on lecturers these days at Third Level to you know learning outcomes and end products in a number of Masters, supervision and everything, there is a kind of ehm. I mean a friend of mine is a lecturer in Irish in college, there is a kind of enormous pressure on them in some ways, their main job of teaching is almost like an afterthought these days. And that culture is very strong I think. It's all about publications, all about research, ehm and teaching now seems like an afterthought. (Simon, MA supervisee)*

Another way of framing the gaze in postgraduate supervision can be found in Ettinger's *Matrixial Gaze* (2006: 176-210). Within this conceptualization there is no object or subject, but a move beyond it towards a "trans-subjectivity", where the gaze is partially shared, is not in opposition, but is engaged in a "process of co-emergence". The gaze in is not simply "witnessed but 'wit(h)nessed" as a shared becoming. It may be well and good to theorise a gaze as having no object or subject, but within MA supervision the gaze is firmly focused upon a specific boundary object – the dissertation. Boundary objects can be interpreted differently and hold different meanings for different social worlds, while simultaneously maintaining a structure that is identifiable by all parties **(**Star & Griesemer, 1999**).** Analogously, the boundary object of an MA supervision (the MA thesis) can be understood as "a means of translation" (Star & Griesemer, 1999: 393), that converts information into academic knowledge through a communication and dialogue that is informed by institutional power dynamics. Yet, the impact of this upon an MA

student's identity is dependent upon what position they adopt towards this institutional power. To better understand this positioning, I decided to ask the MA supervisees how they understood their role in MA supervision.

4.2.2.4 Performance Boundaries

MA supervision for MA supervisees is a performance of an academic identity. The idea that MA supervision is a type of performance that lasts the duration of the course of study was a common theme throughout my conversations with MA supervisees. For the student, the act of completing a postgraduate qualification and the writing of a dissertation is a type of performance; the audience consisting of their supervisor and a virtual, imagined audience perceived only by themselves.

> *I know my purpose and I know my audience, I just need the two of them to match up. You know it's the wording and the phrasing of it all that, will be the proof of the pudding. (Louise, MA supervisee)*

The understanding of MA supervision gains an additional dimension if we see it as a form of performance management. Armstrong and Baron (1998 cited in Zafron & Logan, 2009: 74) define it as a "strategic and integrated approach to increasing the effectiveness of organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors." Postgraduate supervision occurs within the organizational context of Higher Education and is motivated by the prevailing consensus that informs organizational strategy (McWilliam, 2004). If one takes a broad overview of the Higher Education establishment as a whole, the overall strategic goal of the organization is interwoven with the objectives devised by various departments and schools. Like the Butterfly Effect (Lorenz, 1963), individuals achieving their objectives will influence the goals of departments/schools, and the performance of each department will in turn influence the strategic goals of the entire academic establishment. In the same way, MA supervision must be explicit it its strategic goals as supervisees achieving their objectives influences the goals of supervisors, which also may in turn influence the goals of academic departments/schools.

Another process accompanying MA supervision for MA supervisees and is intrinsic to the idea of performance is performativity. Performativity is a concept derived from Judith Butler's (1993) work *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. In the context of Fourth Level Education, we recognize that a student does not become a researcher just by virtue of signing up for a postgraduate course; they must first be conditioned into the identity of researcher by the adoption of specific social meanings and values privileged by their discipline (Manathunga, 2007). Butler (2007: 185) characterises such practices as 'performative' as they are 'fabrications' of an identity.

Within any given society, institutions (such as the university) typify the fabric of the social structure, and within capitalist societies, the social structure also compromises of heterogeneous knowledge constructs such as gender, economic exchange, sexuality and property rights. Social actors adopt aspects of institutional networks in order to understand their innate drives. In so doing, the social actor makes these desires meaningful and communicates them in specific ways. This is done repetitively and by behaving in an iterative manner, in so doing an individual 'performs' and hence continually constitutes, reprises and reshapes their identity (Tyler, 2011). The accent upon iterability is key to understanding Butler's concept of performativity, which she defines as "the vehicle through which ontological effects are established" (1997b: 236). Notably, performative acts must be repeated to produce that which they name:

> *[I]f a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that 'success' is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition of citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices. (Butler 1993, pp. 226-27)*

Butler's focus on iterability, instead of intentionality, essentially means that there is no autonomous agent within the relationship, that no 'I' mediates discourse and carries out its purpose (Scharff, 2011). Coupled with the onus upon iterability, temporality is essential to Butler's typology, as performances are only made possible through the reiteration of norms and conventions. Although, this reiteration of norms and conventions was witnessed in the data, it was also found that the performance given by supervisees in MA

supervision was also moulded by the unique demands exerted by the production of research.

The demands of MA research are of such a unique nature, the type of commitment that this engenders in students, the limited amount of time they have to complete their course of study, their position within the institution so confined, that the performances given by MA students are essential for a student's affective and intellectual survival in Higher Education. These performances, as I will show in my analysis, are designed to afford the MA student protection against perceived threats that lurk in the creation of any intellectual body of work or academic identity and are quite often disguised behind a 'love of learning' or masked behind an 'innate value of education' attitude.

What is of marked interest for this research is the boundedness of this academic performance. While MA students do perceive the act of doing research as a performance that will be evaluated, simultaneously they also seem to feel the need to manufacture a boundary between their identities as researchers and other more personal aspects of their lives. The concept of boundedness as being linked to performance is echoed in Goffman's book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). He defines performance as being associated with separateness, especially when he argues that a performance consists of "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (1959: 70).

If we relate this insight to how MA supervision is viewed by the supervisees, Goffman (1967) divides performance into a 'showing that' and 'showing to'. The first feature connects with the skill of the actor to make use of the performative repertoires available and to make use of them as if they were directly connected with some 'sacred' dimension. Goffman claimed these were registered in the roles and on the 'faces' of the actors throughout their commitment to their social situation. Using Goffman's (1967) theory to redefine the above quote, we can observe Louise connecting the writing of her thesis to a sense of purpose, which can be read as transcendental in its scope, a unfolding of a

predestinated script, yet on a more banal level it also points to her embodiment of the role of researcher and the writing of identity. This mirrors Kamler and Thomson's (2006) argument that the performance of a postgraduate researcher's identity is embedded in the discourses that inform the narrative of supervision. They claim that it is the discursive act of supervision that binds the "various discursive events, modes and assemblages" together (2006:17). In this way the narrative identity of the supervisee is made known by the way in which they are seen and described by the audience of the supervisor.

The application of Goffman's (1967) second feature of "showing to" is just as illustrative, and relates to the possibility of supporting a stable and continuous actor/ audience relationship. This operates on a much deeper level than just 'showing that', and can be allied with the previous idea of the supervisors' gaze, but it complicates this dynamic as the audience is simultaneously real and imagined thus introducing elements of self-reflexivity and an openness to risk. Writing is a transformative process and is inherently risky, especially when being evaluated by an experienced audience, be they real (the supervisor) or imagined (the virtual audience). Naturally, risks are a necessary evil for academic productivity and creativity - especially for those, like MA supervisees, who are writing themselves into academic identities (Fishman et al, 2005).

Much of the anxiety associated with academic writing is associated with the idea that postgraduate study (and academia in general) is a performative space, but one that is not recognized as such and is underdramatised to the soundtrack of everyday humdrum and natural normalcy. MA supervisors perform their role by acting out the accepted discourse of authority and professional supervisory relationships; MA students perform their roles equally well, donning masks (or 'faces') and acting out the character of learner, subversive, subordinate, and in some exceptional cases, authority (Jones, 2010). Ironically, these identities are rarely described as performances, but if we were to do this what becomes apparent is that these performances aim to solidify/validate supervisory relationships and serve to reify, what can only be described as the institutionalised ritual, of supervision, an accepted discourse of power that posits supervisor as knowledge authority and supervisee as knowledge recipient. In the words of David Bartholomae:

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> *[T]he writer must leam that his authority is not established through his presence but through his absence-through his ability, that is, to speak as a god-like source beyond the limitations of any particular social or historical moment; to speak by means of the wisdom of convention through the oversounds of official or authoritative utterance, as the voice of logic or the voice of the community (1997: 609).*

However, voicing students in the performance of academic literacy, sensitizing them to rhetoric, methodologies, convention and analytic conventions has the paradoxical effect of enabling them to subvert the role ascribed to them as 'supervisee' or 'student', as well as allowing them to perform subversion through the erection of psychological boundaries that serve to limit the amount of investment given to the development of their researcher identity. When supervisees choose to adopt the authoritative voice in the arena of supervision and academic writing, they come to realize that being an authority in any given area involves imagining oneself as an authority, especially in spoken or written communications. To view something as a performance allows a certain amount of objectivity and criticality to shape a person's vision of the environment they find themselves in. With this realization, supervisees' can come to view the supervisor's role as a performance that they may or may not choose to emulate:

> *I'm actually quite proud of myself that I've never done my PhD and I could have. I could have done the one I was accepted onto in Trinity but I just couldn't see the connection between ... , the pay wouldn't add up as a teacher you know... Certainly the motivation wasn't and the ambition wasn't there. (Simon, MA supervisee)*

Nyong'o (2009) advances the argument that performances and performativity have a highly politicized orientation that highlights minority resistance and alternative world making. Erving Goffman (1973) also concludes that performance is associated with the idea of marginality. Analogously, in context of MA supervision, the erection of performance boundaries was found to result in a similar manufacturing of alterity. Yet this is further complicated if we observe the nature of boundaries that are erected:

Simon (MA supervisee): Ehm I'd a choice there at the weekend, do I do pre-corrections or do I do work for this? My friend gave me an analogy of what it's like. Do you want to stand in dog shit or do you want to stand in dog manure? I liked it. I thought it was actually a nice analogy.

Interviewer: And which one did you decide to stand in?

Simon (MA supervisee): I had to go away and do corrections because I've piles of pressure this year. But you know that was the choice I had to make.

The dog shit/dog manure analogy reveals a tension that exists for MA students that is overlooked in the current writings on postgraduate supervision and Higher Education in general. This issue has to do with how the MA student positions the 'time' and 'space' of life/work/study. It reveals to us how students' attempt to spatiotemporally organize their period of study and how boundaries between life/work/study become increasingly blurred. If we choose to simply look at only what occurs within the supervision meetings, where live bodies interact with one another and communicate, we overlook the fact that the performance demanded by postgraduate study for students involves identities being thrown into a concentrated flux, a flux that they attempt to control through attempting to define boundaries, but as they progress through their course of study those boundaries become less and less secure and more and more open to compromise. Work becomes Study and Study becomes Life, which has an interesting parallel to how the supervisors themselves describe how they became professional academics. But the description of the act of performing research as 'dog manure', a slightly more cultured flavour of dog shit, embodies the student's stance as one of boundary-making resistance to becoming a professional academic. This is shown in a distinction he makes between what motivates a reciprocal relationship of the supervisor (as acting from a sense of professionalism) and the supervisee (as acting from vocation):

That's how I would see it, that vocation should imply less pain. And I kind of would have railed against that, that professionalism... and yet at the same time, the longer I go on, there is an element of we're not saying vocation, there is an element of caring that goes beyond your contract and professionalism and obligations, and that I think in education is constant. (Simon, MA supervisee)

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For this student, professionalism is distinct from vocation, vocation being the motivating force behind him doing his job. It has to be remarked that in this distinction between professionalism and vocation, for the student the most valued asset is vocation as opposed to professionalism. Again we can read a subtle resistance to the values promulgated by the academic supervisors. While students are limited by the academic rules of conduct laid down by research guidelines, the academic organization and meetings with supervisors, (methodologies, deadlines, politeness), these for the students are procedural and practical, and do not necessarily function on a cognitive level. In fact, MA supervision for students can be seen as a 'cultural pragmatics' (Alexander, 2004) were the performance of academic identity requires an element of 'fusion' between those acting out the roles, the relevant audiences, the symbolic constructions, the display of social power, the collective representations and their *mise-en-scene*.

In this way, MA supervision can be understood as fulfilling an iterative function that informs academic practice and understandings of research. A similar revelation comes from Butler's (1993) emphasis upon the temporality of performance. Applying this insight to the phenomenon under investigation, we come to see that students' experience of supervision is time limited and therefore temporal. This raises questions about the conceptualisation of agency. As a performative act has to be repeated in order to be efficacious, it also contains within it the seeds of agentic reiteration:

> *The force of repetition in language may be the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency - not linked to the fiction of the ego as master of circumstance - is derived from the impossibility of choice"* (Butler, 1993: 124).

The power behind performative actions is rooted in and can only be cultivated through repetition. Yet, as Scharff (2011) aptly points out, the reliance upon iteration, also means that repetition can fail to repeat 'loyally', meaning the repetitive action can be defective or discordant thus causing the performative act to become ambiguous. Therefore, it may be argued that the performance of academic identity can provide the stage for resistance to canonical or organizational ways of being. This is an aspect that will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

Just as the amount of ambiguity associated the MA supervisors' role has increased, is increasing, and is likely to go on increasing so too is the amount of ambiguity associated with the role played by the supervisee. But, it must also be acknowledged that the pressures differ depending on ethnicity, professional background, age, experience, family life, employment, social life, geography and various other personal contexts (Lesko et al, 2008). That said, consider for a moment an MA student in the most demanding situation - strongly committed, but having to cope with a number of difficult life situations- his problem may be viewed by his supervisor as a crisis of confidence, an inability to grasp the nuances of the topic, or a lack of commitment to the supervisory process. The investments and sacrifices he has made to reach this point are all at risk and may be lost. He faces the educational endgame. This is not about an abstract love of learning. This is about raw endurance. What is at risk is not only his physical and mental well-being, but also his continuance in education, his future career prospects, his professional identity, his status, his ability to learn, his motivation and his self-confidence. Just because these parallel risks tend to be beyond the scope of what is openly spoken about in supervision, we would be very naive to believe that they did not motivate how students orientate themselves towards their postgraduate experience.

MA students commit to a course of study. Once a person has made a commitment, it comes actualised through an aggregation of intellectual, personal and social investments. Higher Education is an institutionalised space. Institutions do not change to accommodate the individual, the individual must adapt to the institutionalised order of things. Higher Education postgraduates are no exception. Students must don a mask and perform a certain role in order to complete their studies. When problems arise, be they real or imagined, this mask will slip and may even invalidate the research process. However, the phenomena under investigation here are not as easy to quantify as that.

If we ascribe to performance as pertaining to the rules of conduct in MA supervision, then we come to realize that the norms that are taken for granted by the supervisors themselves, are understood by the supervisees as prescriptive 'scripts' that are constituted

by and regulated by a virtual audience of imagined academic peers. In the supervisory sessions and the actual writing of the thesis supervisees feel the need to show *in vivo* their competence and skills and desire to be appreciated, assessed and validated by the supervisor and the wider 'virtual' audience of agentive academics. These rules are not made explicit in the 'script' of how to perform the role of supervisee, but are coded and embedded in broader organizational and cultural structures which subsume the performance of the MA student; yet they still serve to mark out parameters and directions for acting. In MA supervision, it may be asserted that the role played by supervisees is informed by the materials they have access to, the scripts and intellectual 'props' available, however this role is primarily evaluated (by the supervisee) through a specific, bounded event, specifically their performance of 'doing' research. This is a perspective that contradicts the viewpoint given by the academic supervisors and calls for a re-interpretation of what relational dynamics are at play in MA supervision.

4.3 Conclusion

Qualitative research has the tendency to simultaneously raise both important and disconcerting questions about the fundamental assumptions, the accepted perceptions and postulated purposes of the situation under investigation. It can lead to further questioning which can result in a deeper and more concerted focus on the dynamics at play in any given social sphere.

An underlying strength of qualitative research is its ability to uncover overlooked elements of the phenomena under investigation. In academic organisations, who generally present themselves as being bureaucratically motivated by rationality, risk management and expertise, the role played by ambiguity tends to be ignored or expunged from open discussion. This is especially true when one reads through the current literature on postgraduate supervision and then contrasts it with how both MA supervisors and supervisees describe and understand the real-life practice of supervision. In general, the majority of the research on academic supervision is concerned with

artificially rationalising academic work into bureaucratic forms, and overlooking how the negoiation of ambiguity constitutes supervisory practice.

This chapter has drawn on the findings from a qualitative study of MA supervision in order to initiate a reinterpretation of what motivates both parties in the MA supervisory dyad. It does not claim that all previous research on postgraduate supervision and their resultant findings are incorrect; only that the majority of it remains provisional and open to question. It does not claim that aspects of postgraduate supervision as discussed here in relation to MA supervision are emblematic of postgraduate supervision as a whole. But it does identify and reappraise particular motives ascribed to postgraduate supervision by MA supervisors and supervisees that have a different character, are designed to meet different strategic aims and have different consequences then have, until now, commonly been taken for granted. These are academic professionalism for MA supervisors and boundary making for MA supervisees.

4.3.1 Academic Professionalism

The concept of academic professionalism, when framed by the motivational factors that arose out of the data analysis, it seems, can serve to alleviate the anxieties associated with the ambiguities of postgraduate research and increase the opportunities for reflective practice. It helps supervisors to track the developmental trajectory of their supervisees. In these respects, professionalism provides supervisors with a valuable tool with which they can counter the effects of working within a risk-adverse organisation (McWilliam, 2008) and the "unbundling" of academic identity (MacFarlane, 2010). It may even act as an emotional counterbalance to these cultural elements over which knowledge workers have no control.

However, the re-framing of the concept of professionalism as having a strong personal component constitutes a major challenge to the role played by professional expertise in academia and the emphasis that is placed on this in the existing literature. Still, the existence of a personal component within academic professionalism does not undermine

the important role professional expertise plays in postgraduate supervision, but in actual fact adds to the understanding of the relational dynamics at play throughout the research process. This study reveals three ways in which the recognition of the personal component in postgraduate supervision enables a re-evaluation of the concept of academic professionalism.

1. Academic professionalism entails the transmission of an academic identity that is located within a research culture.

The concept of academic professionalism, it seems, can alleviate ambiguity and increase the opportunities for the development of a coherent academic identity. Academic professionalism enhances the delivery of stagies for collaborative learning, risk management and provides a foundation for the construction of an academic identity within a Higher Education institution. In these respects, professionalism helps to counterbalance the negative effects associated with the ambiguity of postgraduate research.

The supervisors interviewed stipulated that professionalism enabled them to provide a quality and continuity of care that begins in the supervisory relationship, but also extends beyond that into a broader research network and culture. Professionalism gave them space to develop an objectivity that allowed them to communicate openly and honestly with supervisees and to productively encourage them in their studies. 'Vocational care' seems to be the most relevant descriptive term that embodies the mentoring behaviours occuring in MA supervision and was found to be a dominant source of motivation for the supervisors interviewed. Ironically, while vocational care is commonly associated with teaching (Booth, 1998; Palmer, 1998) and the professions (Baumann et al, 2011; Alvesson, 2001) this has not been due recognition in the current literature on supervision. Data supporting these observations is dealt with more extensively in the next chapter but the words of two supervisors capture the dominant sensibilities here:

> *I suppose in many ways [supervision] is a mentoring role for that matter. Issues need to come from the mentee and then the mentor has to draw on their experiences (Dylan, MA Supervisor).*

I think that that, in turn, in her context and in mine, required a degree of soul searching as well and I think that maybe that soul-searching of "what is it that I want to do and research?" and "why is it meaningful to me?" but I think that it's meaningful insofar as, while it may be a unique piece of work, that it also applies to a person's practice so that they're not only developing research skills and so on but that they're also sort of realising something that is applicable to them in their workplace and will perhaps lead to other questions and I think that that's what motivates somebody (Caroline, MA Supervisor).

A third supervisor summed up a fundamental, yet overlooked aspect of supervision:

You gain more than just research. There's more added value to it, if you do it right, I think. It's my experience of being mentored myself [by my academic supervisors] It was bigger than that. They had an absolute interest and for whatever length of time it lasted for, they had a definite interest in how they were doing. They were interested in you (Clara, MA Supervisor).

These remarks reveal a supervisory commitment to a quality of care, a professional and vocational commitment that cannot be dismissed as a *"part of the job description".* For these supervisors, concerns about the quality of care overtook ones about time, money and contractual obligations, even when opportunities to enhance these presented themselves.

2. Academic professionalism, especially in the area of postgraduate supervision, involves accounting for educational practices.

Supervisory accounting practices cannot simply be categorised as a reaction to the "increased risk-consciousness" in a Higher Education, as it allows supervisors to track and plan for the future progress of their supervisees. The immediate nature of the MA supervisory relationship, its centrality within the supervisor's world, and the multiple demands it puts on the supervisor for time, energy and intellectual resources, has caused supervisors to initiate accounting practices to map supervisees academic development and research trajectories. This accountability and its related accounting practices are not just confined to the supervisory dyad, but also has the effect of causing supervisors to become pre-occupied with the outcomes associated with their actions, reflections and research preferences. The supervisors interviewed strove to be practical and research-

focused not just inside their supervisory dyads, but outside of them as well, exercising their energies towards what would best and most saliently benefit their own supervisees: co-publishing articles, conference attendance, research dissemination, providing references and further education/employment opportunities.

Although accounting practices tended to be initiated in order to improve present supervisory relationships, these relationships tended to be time-limited and rather transient because of the duration of the degree. Resulting from this, the lessons learnt from the accounting practices were applied to possible future supervisees, but because of the ambigious nature of this goal the actual effect was that accountability became absorbed into the prevailing culture of individualism that has become historically and institutionally embedded in the work ethics of academics who describe themselves as professional.

3. Academic professional development cannot be circumscribed to just formal skills training as a core element in this process involves subjective reflection on and a personal evaluation of educational practice.

A curious internalization/externalization dynamic can be recognized in what MA supervisors describe as professionalism. This aspect can be best understood if we adopt a CHAT perspective. One of the key definitions of internalization/externalization is by Leont'ev (1981: 183) and it is seen to be related to the understanding of contextual structures and processes in "organis[ing of] external stimuli and us[ing] them to accomplish the objective". In other words, the extent of learning to be a professional postgraduate supervisor involves the understanding of context and processes of self and supervisee in order to coordinate them with external artifacts that may be used to carry out the activity of producing research.

It seems that supervisors' professional attitudes towards supervision are very much rooted in the way the supervisors themselves experienced their own postgraduate supervision. It may be further postulated that these experiences in turn lead to the development of various processes, conceptualisations and structures related to how

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supervision should be done and the learning outcomes attached to the act of producing research-based knowledge. The relationship between the internalization/externalization dynamic and the production of a learning identity has been theorized by Roth et al. (2004) in their study of the attitudes of teachers and students in schools. They observed that through the mutual internalization and externalization of respect, individuals entered into a mediated educational relationship. What I claim is that MA supervisors enter into a mediated educational relationship with themselves, whereby they construct a professional supervisory identity for themselves by creating an ongoing dialogue between the external and internal manifestations of their academic selves. If we were to present this in a diagrammatic format, this dynamic would look something like this:

| Internal Aspect of the Academic Self (Personal | | Professional Postgraduate Supervisor Identity | | External Aspect of the Academic Self (The Practice of |

Figure 4.5: A Diagrammatic representation of the creation of Postgraduate Supervisor Identity.

The presence of subjective reflection on the supervision process enables academic professional development in MA supervision, while its absence by no means dismisses any possibility of academic professional development. More than this, the type of reflective processes that are afforded by personal evaluations of supervisory practice may not always be those that enhance supervisor development and relational dynamics with supervisees. As we shall see this has a salient linkage to the emerging fourth generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and its efforts to correct the neglect of subjective experience in social scientific research (Sannino & Sutter, 2011). In Chapter 5, I will investigate these reflective processes further by looking at how the MA supervisory relationship creates a shared psychoactive space, which does much to colour both parties experience of MA supervision.

4.3.2 Boundary Making

The MA supervisees' narratives in this chapter reveal conflicts between students' beliefs about the supervision process and the corresponding supervisory norms. For example, while MA supervisees desired to become part of a wider research community, all the students interviewed saw the production of research as a competitive enterprise. Students created their identities as researchers in relation to their supervisors, but set up boundaries to prevent this identity from becoming too real by defining the practice of MA research as temporal or performative. This 'bracketing' or 'bounding' of the MA experience afforded students a distance from an institutional interrogation of their newly formed researcher identities, and it reiterated conventional, known, and valued modes of self outside of an academic learning environment. This can be read as an economizing of any potential psychological reward or loss from the course of MA study. In this way, potential threats to a students' conceptualizations of their educational, social or political selves could be reduced by viewing the MA as a bounded educational event.

For the supervisee, the contract of supervision is framed and limited by the manufacture of psychological boundaries that are designed to separate academic and non-academic lifeworlds. This is done by allocating distinct identities to each one. Supervisees' non-academic identities tended to be related to the spheres of work, family and friends, was seen to have a more long term relevance than the academic identity and was defined as being more congruent to their real sense of self. Supervisees' academic identity tended to be characterised as an artificial construction, as being time limited and a performative act whose success or failure was judged by a virtual, unseen academic audience.

This research suggests that there are at least three different psychological boundaries that supervisees erect in the course of MA supervision: (1) relationship boundaries; (2) power boundaries; (3) performance boundaries. I propose that these factors should be taken into account when theorising postgraduate supervision so as to map the relational dynamics of MA supervision. These boundaries were used by MA supervisees to structure their

identities as academic researchers and to define this identity as distinct from other non-academic identities. The first of these boundaries relates to the supervisor-supervisee relationship. For supervisees, supervision was framed as a professional relationship that distanced itself from other relationships by formal procedures, conformity to institutional norms and respect for the supervisor's status within the HE organisation.

Power boundaries within postgraduate supervision as understood by MA supervisees were shown to counter-indicate the traditional Marxist theorisation of power as coming from above. Supervisees maintained that there was a sharing of power related to the construction of knowledge within supervision. This was enabled through the adoption of certain power positions by the supervisee, such as humility, respect and desire. However, a shadow side to MA supervision was also recognised by supervisees as being specifically related to the supervisor's evaluative positioning in the relationship. This was theorised through the introduction of the notion of the supervisory 'gaze'.

The final type of boundary is termed performance boundaries. Here the MA experience for the supervisee is understood as being a performance of an academic identity, where research and writing skills are enacted and come to flourish in the production of an academic dissertation. The performatory aspect of the MA is a source of much anxiety for supervisees, but it also enables supervisees to objectively evaluate and sometimes subvert academic identities. MA students, by viewing postgraduate study as a performative act, attempt to further distance their nascent academic identities from 'real-life' contexts by placing temporal and spatial limitations on the act of 'doing' research.

What is of interest to this study is how these boundaries are used to negotiate knowledge and identity within the MA supervisory dyad. As we have seen, the construction of boundaries informs the identity of MA supervisees and serves to protect their nascent scholar identities from outside criticism. If we were to present this in a diagrammatic format the dynamic would be viewed as follows (see figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Motivating Process for MA Supervisees

The ambiguity associated with MA supervision causes supervisees to erect psychological boundaries between their personal identity and their emerging academic identity. This separation of identity arises out of the power dynamics that are at play within the MA supervisory relationship. These boundaries are negotiated, re-negotiated and clarified through the process of supervision. It must be borne in mind that the findings from the data show that MA supervisees have a different orientation to research than their supervisors and therefore see the MA relationship as a time limited and evaluatuive event, which for the supervisee is ultimately a performance of academic identity.

In sum, then in recognising the role played by boundaries in informing MA student's identity, we come to see MA supervision as a type of boundary work, where supervisees choose to perform the identity of researcher by allowing themselves to be driven by a desire for knowledge, but at the same time remaining detached from said identity in order to somewhat deflect the intensity of the supervisory gaze. It may be suggested that this framework allows for a greater sense of how the discursive practice of MA supervision both shapes and is shaped by the MA supervisees themselves. By listening to the supervisees' voice we can hear the experience of the learning self, the process of becoming and the academic performance that is at the core of scholarly identity formation, whether it is heard in their writing, the feedback from their supervisors, or in the relationship they have created with their supervisors.

In this chapter, we have heard how both parties in the MA dyad are individually motivated to deal with the ambiguity of the supervisory experience. How each party is understands the role of the self and the Other in the MA supervisory relationship has been investigated. These constitute the individual relational dynamics of supervisee and supervisor in MA supervision. The recognition of these two viewpoints is integral to the development of an effective argument for a re-evaluation of MA supervision as a shared relational space (the subject of the next chapter) and recognising that a hidden outcome of the MA supervisory relationship is the disciplined improvisation of academic identity (to be discussed in chapter 6).

CHAPTER 5

CLAIMS AND FINDINGS

"Just Between Us…": The Paradox of Supervisory Space

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
- Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

Boundaries are actually the main factor in space, just as the present, another boundary, is the main factor in time.
   - Eduardo Chillida

Chapter Outline	
MA Supervision as a Psychoactive Space	MA Supervision is located in a physical setting, but its objective is the enabling of the psychoactive space of knowledge and identity creation
Findings from the data	
The Supervisory Encounter as Relational Space	The space of supervision is created out of what both parties contribute to the relationship.
The Climate of MA Supervision	The experience of emotion informs the negotiation of identity in the MA supervisory relationship.
Supervisory Reciprocity	Reciprocity on MA supervision holds an important emotional resonance for both supervisors and supervisees as it entails the investment of meaning in the relationship.
Personal/Professional Identities	Personal and professional identities are in conflict in MA supervision
The Temporal Ordering of Supervisory Space	Time in MA supervision is divided in to Contract and Quality time
Micropolitics in MA Supervision	How the interactions between supervisor and supervisee effect the purpose and distribution of power in MA supervision
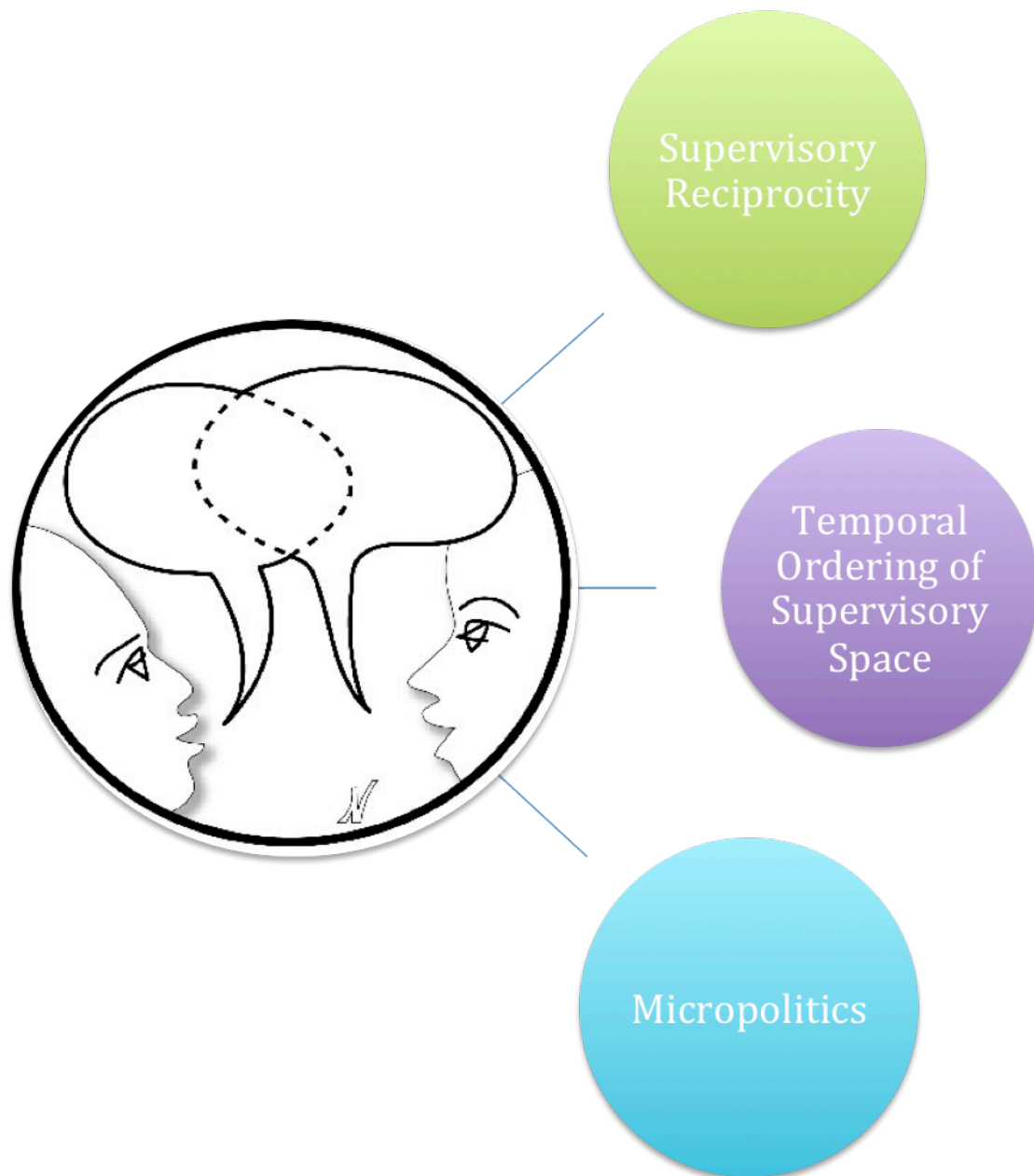
Figure 5.1: The Relational Aspects of MA Supervisory Space

5.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at how the space of MA supervision is informed by certain paradoxical relational dynamics (see figure 5.1).

Using CHAT as an orientating framework, the MA supervisory relationship will be re-conceptualised as a psychoactive space. This makes an contribution to fourth generation CHAT with its emphasis upon how emotion and identity inform social interactions. Although the act of MA supervision tends to be located in a physical space (usually the supervisors office), it was found in the course of this research that its main objective is the enabling of a psychoactive space of knowledge and identity creation, where physical objects, lived events, and imaginative symbols become imbued with meaning.

The main argument of this chapter is that the experience of emotion informs the negotiation of identity and knowledge creation in the MA supervisory relationship. This draws on the theories forwarded by the CHAT perspective (Edwards, 2005; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004), postgraduate supervision (Manathunga, 2005), and philosophy (Bhabha, 1994; Watsuji, 1961). This chapter elaborates upon the findings outlined in Chapter 4. Specifically how the iterative negotiation of ambiguity into clarity by MA supervisors and the boundary-work of MA supervisees informs the space of supervision. Although, both MA supervisors and supervisees construct individual strategies to deal with the ambiguity of supervisory practice, this chapter focuses on the shared space that arises out of the supervisory relationship itself and how the emotional resonances that occur in this space impact upon identity and knowledge formation.

Three relational aspects of the shared space of MA supervision will be outlined in this chapter: supervisory reciprocity; the temporal ordering of supervisory space; and micropolitics. These three elements were found to structure the shared experience of MA supervision. It also emerged in the course of the data analysis that these three elements contain emotional resonances that colour both parties perceptions of the supervisory relationship, the purpose behind doing research and the HE organisation as a whole. As we saw in the previous chapter, for MA supervisors, the negotiation of ambiguity to

clarity, and for supervisees, the construction of boundaries, constitute ways to conserve and separate the academic/professional from the personal. The findings in this chapter extend on this, by revealing that there is a third element at play in MA supervision – the relational- which serves to emotionally define the collective space shared by both participants in the dyad. I will go on to argue that although both parties attempt to individualise the experience of MA supervision, the shared space afforded by the supervisory encounter creates a fundamental paradox that throws percieved learner identities and knowledge creation into flux. This paradox can be best illustrated through the concept of psychoactive space.

5.0.1 The Psychoactive Space of Academic Supervision

In studying the MA supervisory relationship, I argue that academic supervision primarily exists as a psychoactive space. Psychoactive space is defined here as relating to what people perceive and the context of that perception. Psychoactivity has been theorized as occurring when a person's thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations take on symbolic significance in response to what they perceive to be happening in any given context. (Lawley & Penny, 2000). MA supervision can exist in physical space, when the supervisor and the supervisee meet face-to-face and converse as well as a virtual space where dialogue occurs through technological media, but simultaneously it exists in an imagined space that is created between the two parties. The physical space of MA supervision can be perceived directly through the participants' senses. The psychoactive space of supervision can extend as far as a participant's imagination. It is the psychoactive, imagined space that arises out of this supervisory encounter that will be investigated in this chapter.

While some might argue that the space of MA supervision should be termed pedagogical space, this term was found to be too narrow in its scope and application. The term pedagogical space has been used to describe spaces where teaching and learning occur. For example in collaboration incubators, resources supply and store, project space and wet areas, group learning, outdoor learning, student home bases, display spaces, breakout

spaces, individual pods, teacher meeting spaces and presentation spaces (Fisher, 2005). However, this conceptualization of space does not include imaginative or symbolic elements that arise out of how people interpret space. Therefore, it was felt for the purposes of this research that the term 'psychoactive space' would be a much more conducive concept through which to describe and attempt to understand the perceptions related to the space created by the MA supervisory relationship.

The paradoxical nature of academic supervisory space arises out of it being a space that asserts a right to both presence and absence, a space perhaps nourished by the nostalgia of those who have experienced it before or possibly a space that is perceived as frightening due to the very newness of the experience. I argue that postgraduate supervision exists in a paradoxical space. The paradox arises from the fact that although supervision may be located in a physical setting, its purpose is the enabling of a psychoactive space of knowledge and identity creation. It is currently believed that space becomes psychoactive, once a person's mind-body begins to react symbolically to their physical surroundings and/or their imaginative mind-space (Lawley, 2006). Although, it has been shown that emotion plays a major role in psychoactive space (Grove, 1989), emotion does not constitute the whole of psychoactive space. For the purposes of this research, the emotional aspect of this space will be a primary focus as it emerged as a central part of the supervisory experience.

The term 'psychoactive space' was coined by David Grove (1989) to illustrate how perception is related to action. He argues that a space becomes psychoactive when the spatial relations of physical objects (such as the pen and paper used to take notes for a supervision session) and imaginative symbols (such as diagrams illustrating phenomena under investigation) become imbued with extra significance over and above their attached mundane, everyday meaning. As we shall see, this can be very saliently observed in the supervisory dyad. Yet, it must be borne in mind that psychoactive space is primarily relational in that it arises out of a relationship between either the perceiver and the perceived or the perceiver and the context (Sullivan & Rees, 2008). This is in contrast to the traditional argument that there are strict boundary divides between the

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professional and personal cultures that inform academic supervision (Cooke, 2001; Mokyr, 2002; Turner & D'Art, 2008; Grimes & Collins, 2003) and that it is the student supervisee who becomes knowledgeable through the educational guidance of the supervisor (Parry et al., 1994; Delamont et al, 1997b; Delmont et al., 2000). This position becomes increasingly untenable if we investigate the 'in-between' space created by the supervisory relationship itself. Within postgraduate supervision, new knowledge creation emerges out of the blurring of personal and professional boundaries (Manathunga, 2009) and the manufacture of new learning cultures where the boundaries between formal and non-formal learning practices no longer appear to be rigidly specified (Kolbe et al. 2009). This notion of 'in-between' space can also enable MA participants to improvise new academic identities, an improvisation that in the context of MA supervision needs to be both disciplined and related to a discipline. This will be explicated further in the next chapter.

Recent research on postgraduate supervision has explicated how supervisiors think about the supervisory process, and has repeatedly annotated various supervisory strategies to increase supervisee effectivity (Manathunga, 2005), how to instigate various courses of action dependant upon the developmental stage of the research process (Lee, Anzai & Langlotz, 2006), and how to recognise the warning signs of student attrition (Englebretson et al, 2008).

Yet, this is safe territory for researchers as it examines the phenomenon from a cognitive level, and avoids examining how supervisors and supervisees actually *feel* about the the supervision process; about the emotional underpinning that can motivate and guide the work of supervision. Unfortunately, the research that has sought to address the emotional labour of supervision have tended to use preconcieved theoretical agendas and concepts as their starting point. This research does not. It grounds its claims and arguments in the lived experiences of both postgraduate supervisors and supervisees.

Researchers have tended to intellectualise the emotional aspect of supervision by hiding behind reifications such as academic challenge (Granello et al., 2008), facilitation and

challenge (Lamm, 2004), supervisor accountability (Spear, 2000; James & Baldwin, 1999) and boundary definition (Grant & Graham, 1994; Ryan, 1994; Yeatman, 1995; Kehrhahn et al., 1999; Whittle, 1999) or have asked questions or interpreted data based on these concepts (Achinstein, 2006a; Anderson, 1988; Jones, 2001b; Kam, 1997). There has been very little research that focuses upon how postgraduate supervisors themselves describe the emotional dimensions of supervision. Again, this research attempts to redress this oversight.

If one listens to supervisors describe their experiences of supervision, scans accounts of their supervisory sessions, or even engages them in casual conversation on the topic, it is quite obvious that supervisors do have an emotional response to their work, but the way they talk about it is in stark contrast to the terms used by theorists in the field. Whereas theorists speak of concepts such as master-novice (Brennan, 1998; Malfroy, 2005; Boucher & Smyth, 2004), systematic instruction (Mylopoulos & Regehr, 2009; Yuan et al., 2010; Fadde, 2009; Verschaffe et al., 2009) and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1998), supervisors themselves tend to speak in relational terms such as "give and take", "meeting half way" and "helping each other out". This section will focus on how these relational aspects are percieved of and interpreted in MA supervision. As shown in table 5.1 below, the relational dynamics and the relational terms used have explicit emotional resonances that serve to frame the space of MA supervision for both supervisors and supervisees.

Table 5.1: Relational dynamics, relational terms and their associated emotional resonances.

Relational Dynamics	Supervisory Reciprocity	Supervisory Reciprocity	Temporal Ordering of Supervisory Space	Micropolitics	Micropolitics
Emotional Resonance	Support	Compassion	Guilt	Conflict	Control
Relational Terms Used	MA Supervisor: "Give and take" MA Supervisee: "She [supervisor] tries to support me as much as she can, even when we can't meet face to face"	MA Supervisor: "Helping each other out" MA Supervisee: "She's there for me if I need her"	MA Supervisor: "Have I done enough for this student?" MA Supervisee: "Am I on the right track?"	MA Supervisor: "He was just wasting my time!" MA Supervisee: "Sometimes it seems that supervisors play favourites"	MA Supervisor: "Having to yank the chain" MA Supervisee: "There's an art to getting the right match of supervisor"
Vignettes Illustrating Emotional Resonances Associated with Relational Terms	'If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours': A supervisee's submission enables the supervisor to read their work and give feedback. 'Shows that you care': Supervisor is very prompt in her responses to a supervisee's queries via email.	'Accommodating the Student?': A supervisee is going through a bad time sometimes and cannot attend his supervision sessions. His supervisor decides to travel down to a hotel where he lives so as to accommodate him with a supervision session. 'The Confidant': The supervisee feels that she can confide to her supervisor about anything that she feels may hinder his MA progress.	'Could I have done more?': Supervisors sometimes feel guilty over not contacting a supervisee more, not giving them enough guidance and feedback or not arranging more meetings. 'Have I done enough?': Supervisees may feel anxiety over falling behind in their work or not living up to their supervisors' expectations.	'The one-way conversation': Supervisor's experience of a supervisee turning up for supervision sessions without the relevant reading being done and expecting that the supervisor should do the work for him. 'Favouritism?': An incident occured when a supervisor emailed only certain supervisees with relevant information. This was interpreted as some students being 'favoured' over others.	'Yank the chain'': If a supervisee fails to turn up for scheduled supervision meetings and does not regularly submit work to their supervisor. The supervisor sometimes has to "yank the chain" by either writing them a formal letter or contacting them personally so as to sort out the issue. 'Baiting the hook?': Supervisees sometimes pick certain topic areas that they know are certain supervisors' specialised areas so as to increase the chances of being allocated that supervisor.

Interestingly, despite Lev Vygotsky's (1979) famous law (that all intrasubjective processes first originate as intersubjective ones) pertains to emotional experience, it is only recently, in the fourth generation of CHAT, that the role of emotion in activity and motive is being recognised (Roth, 2007). However, if one marries the idea of MA supervision as psychoactive space and the insights afforded by CHAT, we come to see that emotions as intra-psychological processes can be understood as emerging through the interactional inter-psychological processes that arise out of the collective practical involvements that constitute MA supervision (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). This point will be elaborated upon below

5.0.2 CHAT and Psychoactive Space

This chapter attempts to integrate the idea of psychoactive space and the negotiation of supervisory space into a CHAT framework. It is my argument that the concept of psychoactive space in MA supervision can contribute to fourth generation CHAT's attempts to integrate identity and emotion into a relational framework. CHAT has recently been employed to conceptualise the agentive dimension of identity within a social and relational perspective on human life and development (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). Yet despite recent trends to address both the individual and social dimensions of identity in non-dichotomising ways through CHAT (Stetsenko, 2005), the idea of a psychoactive relational space, especially in MA supervisory contexts, has been comparably neglected.

Edwards (2005) is one CHAT theorist who highlights the relational elements in activity. Drawing on her work, which distances itself from viewing knowledge acquisition as corresponding with cognitive processes and participation with behavioural processes, I argue that a relational space emerges out of MA supervision. Alternatively she uses Rommetveit's distinction between two approaches to learning; specifically the difference between 'knowledge about' and a 'search for meaning' (Rommetveit, 2003). Both Edwards (2005) and Rommetveit's (2003) work recognise that a search for meaning has an emotional and relational component that informs participation in and action on the

educational contexts and are emblematic of a move against the over-emphasis upon 'knowledge about' in the CHAT literature (Leont'ev, 1979, 1981b; Engeström, 1999, 2005). Analogously, it may be proposed that a similar dynamic is at play in MA supervision. The recognition of the relational and affective elements has relevance to developing a framework for understanding MA supervision that reconciles the scripted supervisory strategies that characterize the iterative negotiation of ambiguity/clarity of supervisors and the boundary work of supervisees with the lived improvisational experience of the supervisory encounter itself. This is will be further elaborated upon through the introduction of the disciplined improvisation of academic identity, a concept that will be outlined in the next chapter.

Bearing in mind the history and practice associated with postgraduate supervision, as outlined in Chapter 2, it would be remiss to associate the practice of academic supervision as an attempt to transgress 'educational boundaries' (Schroer 2009). Instead this chapter argues that the supervisory relationship has the capability to move beyond the existing educational boundaries found in Higher Education through the creation of a context specific learning space that is co-constructed between the supervisor and supervisee. In this new learning space, the supervisors and supervisees involved consistently reposition themselves relative to one other. It has been recently highlighted that discourses of power and inequality also inform the practice of creating learning spaces, especially in the way that they tend to individualise learning (Ryan, 2011). This research attempts to move beyond the assumption that new educational spaces inevitably enable the propagation of pedagogically legitimated hierarchical structures (Ryan, 2011), towards a recognition of the various relational dynamics that inform the psychoactive space of the dyad as voiced by both participants in the process. Three relational aspects related to MA supervisory space are outlined in this chapter: supervisory reciprocity, time, and micropolitics.

5.1 Findings from the Data

5.2 The Supervisory Encounter as a Relational Space

Following Bhabha (1994), I see the space disclosed by MA supervision as a space of the in-between. As previously mentioned above, the space of MA supervision can be understood in two ways, as a psychoactive theoretical space, or as an actual, geographic space. Looking at the former, the way in which spatiality is associated with the imagined and the metaphoric, leads me to make a connection with the emotional geographies of teaching where space is conceived as patterns of closeness and distance in human interactions that in turn effects how we emotionally experience other people, ourselves, educational spaces, and our wider learning environments (Hargreaves, 2001). In essence, the supervisory space of postgraduate supervision is not owned by either party, but is created out of what both parties contribute to the relationship. If this were represented graphically it would echo the dynamics at play in the traditional yin-yang symbol (see figure 5.2).

The space of MA supervision is made manifest through the production of a physical piece of academic writing. It may be assumed that it is just the supervisee who is emotionally invested in the creation of this physical artifact (Lesko et al., 2008). Yet, I argue that this assumption may prove to be incorrect, because if one looks closely at how this artifact is manufactured what transpires is that it is a shared space created out of the relationship between the supervisee and supervisor that is disclosed. This is clearly illustrated when the issue of responsibility for the production of work is raised.

> *[B]ecause you see they have a responsibility as well so there's two of us in it.*
> *We've both got, like I've a responsibility to give the guidance and they've the*
> *responsibility then to choose what to do with that (Dylan, MA supervisor).*

Watsuji (1961) links artistic and intellectual creation with the climate of the space within which one is located in. Extrapolating Watsuji's (1961) insights onto the realm of postgraduate supervision, it can be advanced that the climate of the relationship informs how much is invested in the research project. This points to a need to become more aware

of the intimate connection between the production of intellectual knowledge and the climate of the MA supervisory relationship.

> *[Y]ou [the MA supervisor] are a leader and a manager is what I'd say you are. You are a combination. You're a transformational and you're also someone who's dealing with transactions so there's two elements. So I think that's what you are. You are combining. You are kind of leading them in a particular pathway. This sounds like a weird comment, you are with them on the pathway but you've an idea of where you are heading to (Caroline, MA supervisor).*

In the above quote, Caroline describes the supervisor's role as transformational and managing, in that the supervisor both leads and accompanies the supervisee on the research journey. This line of thought can be allied with the concept of transformative learning, as theorised by Kalantzis and Cope (2008). It is defined as a socio-cognitive process that denotes interrelated ways of knowing, which can be developed through various educational processes. They propose that learning occurs through the experiencing of new ideas, contexts or behaviours and how these experiences are made meaningful by comparing them with that which we already know or have experienced. Locating these experiences into existing schemas enables learners to analyse these new concepts by revealing their fundamental features and their positioning within relevant social, cultural and historical contexts. Applying this to MA supervision, this process can be seen to permit the supervisee to apply this new knowledge in culturally discernable or innovative new ways in alternative contexts, such as the supervisory relationship or the area being researched. In addition to this, it may be advanced that the supervisor also has a key role in developing, connecting and making meaningful learning and new knowledge that is relevant and can be applied across space and time, not alone for themselves, but for their supervisees as well.

The sentiments in the above quote also echo the transformative elements attached to identity found in Vygotsky's psychology, a psychology that forms the basis for the CHAT perspective.

Vygotsky is concerned to study how people, through the use of their own social activities, by changing their own conditions of existence, can change themselves (Shotter, 1993:111)

The transformative elements in the MA supervisory experience can be understood as being intrinsically linked to how each participant realises their ability to change their conditions of existence, or worldview. This has clear educational implications for our conceptualisation of the supervisory relationship. Supervisees' activity in MA supervision consists of utilising both material and conceptual tools to construct an academic identity for themselves; therefore the challenge for MA supervisors is to improve the conceptual capabilities of MA supervisees (Edwards, 2005). I argue that it is the psychoactive space that is created by the relational aspects of MA supervision that enables both participants to move from the limitations of heavily situated understandings of what knowledge is towards apprehending knowledge as having a transformative potential that is life-enhancing and situation free.

5.2.1 MA Supervision as a Negotiation of Academicity

Yet, the space created by the supervisory encounter problematizes the dichotomies between subject and object and between institutional and personal cultures. It does this by disclosing a relational space where such dichotomies become open to question. For example within MA supervisory relationship, the boundary between personal and professional academic identities that exists in the undergraduate experience, is reframed due to the relationality at the heart of the postgraduate experience where both supervisor and supervisee improvise new roles befitting the supervisory context. This has been theorised as "negotiating academicity" by Eva Bendix Petersen (2007). She argues that the act of postgraduate supervision is a process of category boundary work, which entails a relationship where boundaries that define culturally intelligible performance of academic identity are "negotiated, maintained, challenged and reconstructed (2007: 475). This conceptualisation is also mirrored by Green's (2004) assertion that while discourses surrounding postgraduate supervision tend to focus upon the production of text as an effective outcome, simultaneously there is an intense negotiation of identity which is "as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production" (2005: 153). Kamler

and Thomson (2006) further this argument by stressing that supervision pedagogies can be best conceived as text work/identity work, where text and identity work occur through dialogue, writing and experience which is enabled through the postgraduate supervisory relationship. Again this echoes the central argument contained in this chapter, that a core objective behind MA supervision is the enabling of a psychoactive space of knowledge and identity construction.

Petersen's idea of postgraduate supervision corresponds with Manathunga's (2011) claim that research is an intercultural contact zone. In this section, I would like to unpack how academic identity is negotiated and affected by the space created by the MA supervisory relationship.

> *Yeah I think you get highs and lows really [as a MA supervisor], disappointments and then levels of joy. It is a bit of rollercoaster (Clara, MA supervisor)*

It is interesting to note that the articulation of emotion in the above quote is both mediated and signified spatially. This indicates a more profound finding from the data, namely that emotions in MA supervision tend to be spatially signified, as is illustrated in table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: How emotions in MA supervision are spatially signified.

Spatial Signifier	Emotion
"She's <u>there</u> for me" (Supervisee describing relationship with her supervisor)	Assured
"Should I <u>step in</u> dog shit or dog manure?" (Supervisee talking about deciding to do work related to his job or work on his MA)	Dissatisfied
"She's <u>up there</u>" (Supervisor describing her own supervisor)	Awe
"You have to tell them to <u>step up to the mark</u>" (Supervisor speaking about dealing with difficult supervisees)	Pressured

Entering into a conversation with Hargreaves' (2000; 2001) emotional geographies of education and human interaction reveals that the experience of emotion in space informs the negotiation of identity within MA supervisory relationships:

> *. . . the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and colour the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other (Hargreaves, 2000: 815).*

Recognising the emotional resonance at the heart of the MA supervisory relationship emphases the subjective aspects of identity formation that occur within supervisory space. Essentially, it identifies MA supervision as a relational space that is transversed by the forms of closeness or distance in supervisor-supervisee interactions. Another MA supervisor further elaborates upon this idea:

> *[T]he being empathic or being [in supervision involves] trying to show a level of understanding of where they [the supervisees] are at and how life is and if an opportunity arises that you are not going to stop that from happening for them? (Caroline, MA supervisor).*

Here the supervisory identity seems to be negotiated through empathizing with where the supervisee's identity is currently positioned. Again, we can recognize an affective note that colours the perception of the supervisory relationship. Butler (1997) argues that social actors are subjects of power and that they become agentic through assuming power. This insight can be used to inform how the MA supervisee comes to negotiate their identity as an academic subject appropriated by, and by appropriating, relevant performances and desires that are classified as being 'academic'. To negotiate an academic identity for themselves, the MA supervisee needs to enact his or her academicity, within the "historical matrices of intelligibility" (Butler, 1990) that exist within the supervisory encounter. Put simply the supervisee must show 'ownership' of the topic being researched:

> *She owned that Masters, you know whilst I directed, I became less and less and less involved in the content say of the Masters, but probably more involved in let's*

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look at this a different way, if you know what I'm trying to say (Clara, MA supervisor).

Yet, this negotiation of identity is somewhat complicated if we acknowledge the fact that in order to enable an academic identity for oneself one cannot enact a contextually unintelligible or inappropriate academic identity that is not recognised by the relevant discourse community. Should a subject's practices be representative of the practices and values of other non-academic discourse communities then this may result in the subject being located outside the academic community (Ryan, 2011).

However, it may be argued that this position overgeneralises the lived elements that embodies the experience of MA supervision. Perhaps the in-between space that arises out of MA supervision enables both parties to improvise a discursive position that is conducive to the production and the interrogation of knowledge, and also becomes a mechanism that enables a natural displacement of staged teacher-student identities. A point that will be discussed further in the following chapter.

> *That you are being, the word, I keep using that word reasonable, that the demands you make in this process are of a reasonable level, taking into account the person that's in front of you, and that you keep very focused in your mind that the purpose of the interaction is to try and support them through the research. That's what you are about. And you are supporting them as a researcher but also at times depending on what's going on, it might just be a small bit of personal stuff that you are reasonable around, those kind of things (Dylan, MA supervisor)*

The temporary displacement of academic identities can be observed in the above quote. Although it is framed as a professional relationship, a personal reasonable-ness enables the supervisor to support the supervisee in their research. Yet, as we shall come to see in the following section, this personal element colours how MA supervision is both perceived and understood.

5.2.2 The Uncanny Element in 'Inbetween Spaces'
An element that is common to both supervisors and supervisees is the experience of being in a space, which is familiar but at the same time is uncanny, or "not like home".

Although some writers choose to represent this element in Freudian terms (Wilson, 2011), I choose to locate it in the pragmatic routine that constitutes MA supervision. The uncanny element involves recognising the ambiguity and affective resonances that characterise the 'in-between space' of the MA supervisory relationship. Here MA supervisor Clara speaks of the contrast that was made manifest in the space afforded by MA supervision by two supervisee's different engagement styles with the research process:

> *Yeah well I suppose, relationship is two way, alright and I suppose on one level looking at the relationship that was coming from me, probably the same relationship was on offer as it were. I was giving the same product to both of the students at the beginning. Obviously that changed over time. So in other words, my relationship with the student who was exceptionally diligent almost solidified and built upon itself, you know, I found after our meetings I felt quite energised after meeting with this student and I'm sure she probably felt the same and you know that ehm that was quite positive. The relationship with the student who left everything to last minute, I suppose it was kind of a strained relationship. It would have had to have been really looking back on it, giving the lack of contact. I mean it wasn't a lack of contact on my end but my relationship and what I would offer in terms of the relationship I'm offering, what probably was important there was that all of my emails whilst they were matter of fact they also reached out a hand you know of help and you know were always quite friendly and you know, I think that especially by email it's very important to format things in the right way (Clara, MA supervisor).*

It can be observed in the above quote that the uncanny element that emerges in the course of MA supervision has to do with the sense that familiar elements such as meeting times, resources, and feedback can be in place, but these familiar elements are made unfamiliar through the vagaries of relationship dynamics. While one can say that the supervisor is familiar with the space of supervision, one cannot say that the supervisee is familiar with the same space, although as we have previously seen they try and make it familiar through comparison with other relationships they have had. It is this disjuncture in the experience of the familiar that may come to define the learning experience at the heart of postgraduate supervision as it tends to evoke what is uncanny about this type of educational relationship, something that reveals an essential paradox related to doing research that of simultaneously being attracted to and repulsed by the object of the study.

For the supervisee the experience of the uncanny in supervision can sometimes cloud the sense of belonging to the academic world that is closely allied with the ability to use the insights and skills that are developed during the course of the study as equipment for living (Ortega, 2004; Ortega, 2001: 1-29). Witness Simon speaking about how motivation and humility inform the role he plays as a MA supervisee:

> *Simon (MA supervisee): I don't know, ehm. I suppose an element of, you'd have to be motivated, you're there for a reason I'd say ehm, certainly a bit of humility.*
>
> *Interviewer: Is humility important?*
>
> *Simon: I think if you are there to learn you are just putting your hand up saying I don't know enough.*

This movement from familiarity to unfamiliarity and vise versa can be linked back to the iterative process of ambiguity/clarity that was found in the previous chapter. It can therefore be postulated that the psychoactive space afforded by MA supervision entails a cyclical movement from ambiguity to clarity and back again in relation to knowledge creation and identity formation, which can be illustrated as follows:

Ambiguity

Clarity

MA
Supervisee

MA
Supervisor
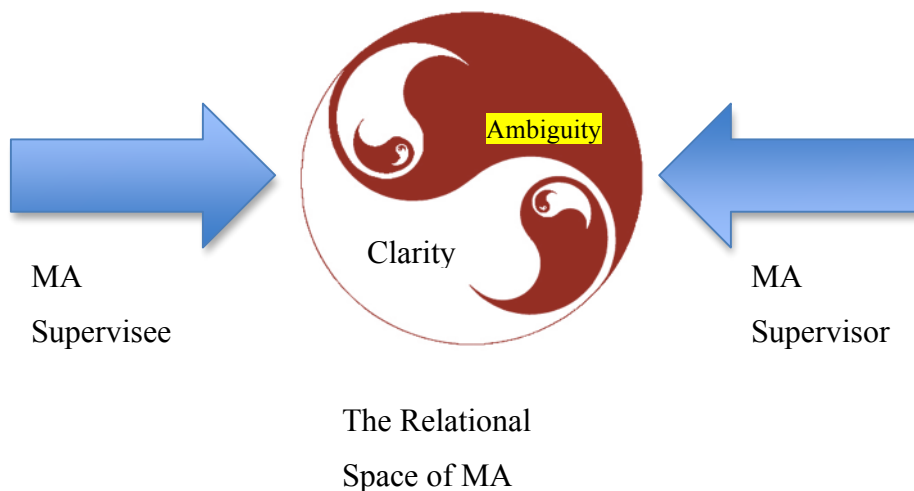
The Relational
Space of MA

Figur   **tional Space of MA Supervision**

What is emerging here is that postgraduate supervision should not be represented as an exclusionary space but as an enabling climate (after Watsuji, 1961) that permits a performance whose ultimate aim is the partial displacement of the existing learner identities of supervisor and supervisee. As Rogoff (1989: 72) explains, "Geographies and their signification thus emerge not as the site of secure and coherent identities but rather as those of disruptive interventions in the historical narratives of culture". However, as we shall see the cultural construction of object motive in MA supervision has a major impact upon the relational composition of MA supervisory space. While the term 'object motive' may seem vague, it is grounded in the CHAT literature and as we shall see is very useful for explicating the meanings that participants attach to the supervisory relationship. One such object motive that emerged from the data was supervisory reciprocity, which is discussed in greater detail below.

5.3 Supervisory Reciprocity and the Object of an Activity

> *The main thing, which distinguishes one activity from an another, however, is the difference in their objects. It is exactly the object of an activity that gives it its determined direction. According to the terminology I have proposed, the object of an activity is its true motive Leont'ev, 1978: 62).*

Social actors motivate themselves differently towards the object of an activity. This is known in the CHAT literature as the 'object motive' (Edwards, 2005). An example of object motive used by Leont'ev was that of traders in gemstones who work with gemstones understand gemstones very differently from how geologists do.

He went on to argue that each group would see different meanings held in the stones and as a result the social practices of each activity system would vary according to the meaning attributed to the object (the gem stone). As seen in the last chapter, the meanings attached to the object of MA supervision by the supervisor and the supervisee differ in their underlying motives. Yet, the CHAT idea of object motive is a useful theoretical tool for developing our understanding of the relational dynamics in MA supervision as it

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recognises that "our actions are elicited by our interpretations of the object and by the ways of engaging with the object that are possible in different sets of socially and historically situated practices" (Edwards, 2005: 4). Leont'ev's emphasis upon object motive takes us to the idea that collective activity influences the object and effects potential responses to it.

One aspect that emerged from the data analysis was how MA supervisors object motive was negotiated in the supervisory encounter. Traditionally, postgraduate supervision has been theorised as a one-way transfer of information from supervisor to supervisee (Yeatman, 1995; McWilliam, 2004). This is based primarily upon the master-apprentice model of learning. However, within the last number of years a major shift has occurred in the postgraduate student demographic, with candidates being predominately older and coming from diverse cultural and experiential backgrounds (Neuman, 2002; Pearson, 2005; Forsyth & Stoff, 2009). This shift has caused some academic supervisors to reflect upon their process of supervision and how it needs to undergo change in order to be educationally effective for not only employment in academia, but also in employment fields outside of Higher Education (Breen, 2008; Forsythe, 2008; Neumann, 2003).

This qualitative research study revealed that the object motive for MA supervisors was effected by a type of reciprocity found within the MA supervisory dyad. Historically, the role played by reciprocity in postgraduate relationships has been comparatively neglected by educational research in both the North American and European contexts, especially within the English speaking world (Eneau, 2008; Pettifer & Clouder, 2008). This is quite interesting as the reciprocal nature of learning was described by Aristotle, especially in his concepts of *philia* and *agapé* (Pagan, 2008), and the importance of positive relationships between students and teachers from the early years to adulthood has been a core tenet of educational literature for decades (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Flyny & Brizo, 2009; Fraser & Walberg, 2005; Kilwein, 1999). Although there is a rich heritage of theories related to adult learning relationships, these have not as of yet been successfully applied to MA supervision. One such conceptualisation that proves useful for

understanding the MA supervisory relationship is Labelle's (1990, 1996, 2000) theory of educational reciprocity.

Reciprocity plays an important role in the MA supervisory dyad. It holds an important emotional resonance for supervisors and supervisees as it is a major factor in the development of trust in the relationship. As one MA supervisor (Caroline) in the study expressed it:

> *I see [supervision] as a joint enterprise because I believe that I do learn [from the supervisees]. It's reciprocal, I do learn a fair bit from them as well as they learn from me as well, I think (Caroline, MA Supervisor).*

The fact that supervisors view MA supervision as a site of learning and meaning creation differentiates the type of reciprocity at play in MA supervision from the majority of those outlined in the literature review. In fact, the type of reciprocity found in MA supervision was found to have parallels with Labelle's (1996) theory of educational reciprocity. This theory highlights how learning, especially independent or self-directed learning, can be concieved as stemming from the relationships that the learner has with others. Labelle (1996) stresses that this is a necessary prerequisite for the education of adults. A major insight provided by this perspective is the idea that, although the aim behind education is the learners's development of autonomy, this autonomy is reliant upon a balance between individual freedom and external inhibitions, as well as being dependant upon the situation and the context (Eneau, 2008). In this sense, the student's learning within any given educational setting can only ever be seen as being only relatively autonomous and is inherently linked to how reciprocity is manifested in specific educational relationships. Labelle argues that the educational process was the most fundamental element that existed in the relationship that was established between the self and other amid the act of learning. In this sense, reciprocity is central to the educational process, yet he goes on to explain that reciprocity is not solely educational but educating in the most profound sense (1996: 1910). In essence, Labelle argues that there is a deep social aspect to reciprocity in educational contexts, an aspect that is found, but not explicitly stated, in the CHAT perspective (Stetsenko, 2005).

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The way in which supervisory reciprocity is linked to the development of trust is also shown in the vignettes illustrating the emotional resonance of support (see Table 5.1). In the supervisor vignette entitled 'If you sctratch my back, I'll scratch yours', we see a "give and take" of knowledge and information that is very similar to Reidy and Green's (2005) supervision as coaching model outlined in the literature review. However, if we compare this to the corresponding supervisee vignette 'Shows that you care', then we come to see a more affective interpretation of the exchange that characterises the relational dynamic of supervisory reciprocity. What emerges here is that meaning is not only being attached to exchanges of information, but also how the Other in the supervisory relationship responds to the exchange. I argue that these responses cannot be rigidly scripted, although they can be filtered through professional and discipline specific channels, but instead arises out of a disciplined improvisation unique to each supervisory relationship, a key concept that will be given due attention in chapter 6.

It was found that MA supervisors themselves placed an important emphasis upon how they themselves saw reciprocity being enacted when they were being supervised and how this allowed them to trust in the research process. It emerged from the data that it was the experience of these educational relationships that provided a basic adaptive template for supervision style. This is illustrated in the following example.

Caroline is a highly motivated supervisor who recognises the fact that she has learnt a lot from her own experience of being supervised. She does not term this type of supervision 'academic supervision', but prefers to call it "mentoring", which to my mind at least humanises the relationship. I asked her what she had learned about supervision from her supervisor:

> *Everything, nearly everything, everything, I'd say, just in terms of her disposition that she is somebody who is... she knows... she gets to know another person well enough that she knows when she should push you, when she should back off. She uses the sandwich approach in terms of talking you through how you are doing (Caroline, MA Supervisor).*

There are two important elements here that point to a central shared relational dynamic at play in supervisory reciprocity. The first is the personal element, where a relationship is based upon both parties trusting one another and finding the correct balance between personalities of the supervisor and the supervisee in order to move things forward. Again and again this was repeated in the interviews with other supervisors. The second element can be termed the professional element, which as we shall come to see is related to relational agency, where the knowledge derived from getting to know the supervisee is tactically used to further their academic progress.

5.3.1 The Confluence of the Personal and Professional
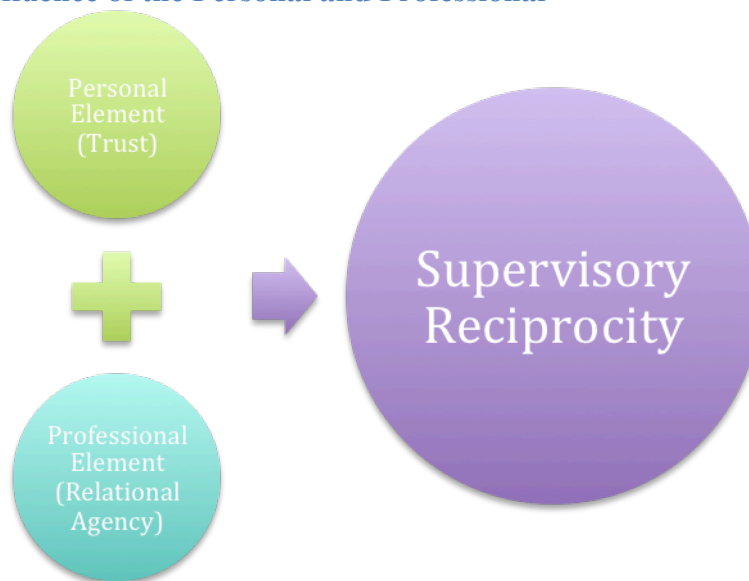
Figure 5.4: The Two Elements at play in Supervisory Reciprocity

Within the culture of supervision afforded by an academic environment, the traditional reciprocal exchange, where people respond to each other in similar ways, cannot take place. This results from the fact that a status imbalance exists between postgraduate supervisees and their supervisors, especially in the areas of social and cultural capital, which tends to result in an ambigious social exchange (Gapova, 2009; Tzeng, 2010; O'Shea, 1998; Rogg, 2001; Chang & Kanno, 2010). It was found that reciprocity, within the context of MA supervision, had to become indirect. This is most obvious when one speaks to supervisors about how their past experiences as supervisees has impacted upon their current supervisory style. The giving back is not to the original benefactor, but is

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passed on to a third party. The MA supervisors interviewed received help, advice and skills from their postgraduate supervisors, and in turn sought to give help, advice and skills of a similar kind to their own supervisees. This was found to be one of the underlying motives for MA supervisors. Let us now interrogate this finding a little bit further.

With any job, there needs to be a degree of motivation, be that intrinsic or extrinsic (Seligman, 2004; Thomas, 2004). The nature of postgraduate supervision is not compensated for by an extrinsic reward, although payment is received for a fixed number of hours (usually four per MA student in Irish Higher Education), the actual number of hours spent actually supervising students (be that on-line or physical contact or the actual correction and commenting on written work) is well in advance of that allocated by academic institutions. Therefore, postgraduate supervisors attempt to motivate themselves through intrinsic reward. Intrinsic motivation occurs when individuals are internally motivated to do something because they find it pleasurable, they think it is important, or they attach significance to what they are learning (Harter, 1981).

It would be too simplistic to state that self-interest is the motivation behind what a supervisor does in supervision. In Dylan's case at least, there is a confluence between the institutional and the personal. In our current historical milieu it is often safer to couch altruistic concern in economic motives. Although popular wisdom dictates that the private and professional should be separated, we only live one life and the various components that make up this tapestry often flow into one another and cannot be easily compartmentalized. This can be seen in a revealing aside that Dylan gave in tangent to our discussion on what motivates some supervisors to invest so much in supervision:

> Interviewer: Just from the way that you are talking there, you place a major value on education and the investment in education.

> Dylan: I think so, I think so. My son is coming up to University age now and God knows how he'll get on because he's an idle apprentice, but I do think that if you can manage to get through to the end of [a college degree] they should.

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The personal element is in constant tension within the professional persona that postgraduate supervisors strive to present (see figure 5.4). This tension is most salient when one looks at how the dynamics are described with in the supervisory dyad. Although the supervisory relationship is described as having many of the characteristics associated with friendship, such as "support", "trust", "honesty", "listening skills", "encouragement", "shared decision-making", and "dialogue", there seems to be an repeated resistance to framing the supervisory relationship as a form of friendship:

> *I think you get to see more of the person than just research, more than just the practitioner of the field that they're in and that you get some sort of concept of, you know, what the person's background is, their personality and vice versa as well. I think that that's very important as well, that they get to know me as well, you know? Friendship is too strong a word! In other words, I'm not saying: "Oh gosh, my students must not become my best friends" rather than there's more to us human beings than our work (Clara, MA supervisor).*

Although, successful supervision does take into account the personal elements of a student, their background and personality, a critical division still exists between the professional relationship of academic supervision and the personal relationship associated with friendship. A possible reason as to why this is framed in such a way is that there exists a fear of losing objectivity on the supervisor's part that may inhibit the correction, marking and evaluation of the written work:

> *Interviewer: So, it's not friendship?*

> *Caroline: I don't see it as friendship at all because your friend may not give you critical feedback. Do you understand me? So, if you don't want critical feedback you should not be in that relationship [...] it's all to help them.*

According to the same supervisor, the dynamic found in MA supervision would be more akin to 'parenting' as opposed to friendship. The parenting metaphor in his case points to a central notion that affects the tenor of the supervisory relationship – specifically the asymmetric power relations:

I do equate it with a parenting thing. There are times when you've got to say: 'no, I'm not available now, you need to do it yourself' or whatever you make those decisions as you move through. Supervising is just like that. It's hierarchical; it's just a different mode. I do think that people need to have the mentoring qualities brought out in them to do the best job possible and the most efficient job because it is more efficient and better for everybody all around, the quality of work is better (Caroline, MA supervisor).

This concurs with Labelle's (1996) theory of educational reciprocity, specifically when he argues that the autonomy of both parties within an educational relationship is created within and through the interpersonal relationship, which is dependent upon a dialectic of interdependence, or a very relative independence. There a paradoxical complementarity at play here as he asserts that one must form an "attachment to the other in order to become oneself, by distinguishing oneself from the other" (Labelle, 1996: 152). This paradox can also be witnessed in the vignettes illustrating the emotional resonance of compassion (see table 5.1). The vignette 'Accommodating the Student', where the supervisor schedules an alternative venue for a supervisee who is experiencing difficulties was one example of many. In the course of the data collection, I was told of various instances where supervisors held supervision sessions over coffee, breakfast and dinner, visited them in hospital, even brought them into their own homes. This goes to show that although supervisors are encouraged to present a 'hard' professional veneer, this does not waylay the strong interpersonal relationship that is core to the experience of MA supervision. This is given further credence when we look to the corresponding vignette from the supervisee's perspective ('The Confidant'). Here we find that the supervisee views the space of MA supervision as a 'safe place' where they can confide to the supervisor about both personal and academic issues. What is emerging from these two perspectives is that the role played by trust in supervisory reciprocity, and possibly the supervisory relationship as a whole cannot be underestimated.

However, other MA supervisors interpret this dynamic differently. What motivates Dylan's supervision boils down to two things - the subject matter and the individual student. The subject matter need not be something that she is familiar with, but she becomes interested in through the student's sharing and communicating their passion for

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the topic. But, an interest in the topic only takes Dylan half the distance: it is the relationship between the two parties that dictates the level of investment. The word she uses to describe the relationship is "rapport", but as we will see this may not always be a good thing:

> *I'd think that most of us would say that we'd become genuinely interested in the work itself and the project, because it's our bread and butter, you know, looking at literature and literary criticism, but I also think by the time that we are supervising a student for their thesis we know them quite well as individuals. Most often they would have done, most of, all of their undergraduate study with us, not always but a lot of times and anyway we would have known them through the MA classes, so there's already a rapport... I think... although it can be a negative one... (Dylan, MA supervisor).*

An important point to note here is the fact that supervisory relationship is influenced by the student's undergraduate experience of the supervisor as a lecturer, and the supervisor in this case first attains an insight into a student's personality through MA classroom interaction. It can therefore be surmised that the student may be bringing preconceived notions of who the supervisor is before the initiation of supervision. The fact that a supervisor may already be known to a student through the persona of lecturer is often overlooked and may be of benefit or hindrance in the initial stages of the relationship. The word that Dylan uses 'rapport', implies a reciprocal exchange between the two parties. It is also interesting to note that the 'gifts' exchanged in such settings are not material objects but informative or knowledge-based subjectivities, which can lead to a certain degree of ambiguity depending upon how they are perceived. Although rapport can be judged to be either positive or negative, if we acknowledge the personal and professional elements at play in the supervisory space, we begin to see that the professional element in supervisory reciprocity is intrinsically related to the how relational agency is valued in the relationship.

5.3.2 Using the CHAT Concept of Relational Agency to Reframe Supervisory Reciprocity

The CHAT concept of relational agency has been applied to the areas of teacher education and social inclusion (Edwards, 2005; Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004; Edwards & Mackenzie, 2005). It is defined by Edwards (2005: 9) as:

> *[A] capacity to work with others to expand the object that you are working on by bringing to bear the sense-making of others and to draw on the resources they offer when responding to that sense-making. It involves joint interpretation of the object, including some contestation and aligning one's responses with those of others in responding to that interpretation. It therefore involves both drawing on the resources of others and being a resource for others.*

I argue that relational agency is a key constituent in the professional element that informs supervisory reciprocity (see figure 5.4). This concept corresponds with the idea of academic mentoring that was outlined in the literature review and can also be linked to the reciprocal dynamic that seems to be unique to postgraduate supervision. An example of this is found in Clara's recollection below.

Clara started her career in postgraduate supervision differently to other supervisors as another supervisor actively mentored her. Again, like Caroline, she uses the term "mentoring" to describe her experience:

> *[T]o begin, my background in supervision would certainly be more of the mentoring than the actual supervision and I suppose, it was for my own professional development as well that a supervisor brought me in (Clara, MA supervisor).*

For Clara, being mentored in postgraduate supervision was very much part and parcel of her professional development as an academic. She was lucky enough to be able to sit in on a more experienced supervisor with four different postgraduates for three years. She found that by observing the more experienced supervisor at work she became *"as near expert as the actual supervisor"*. She drew attention to the fact that there was a reciprocal mentoring at play in the co-supervision, but not the direct reciprocity that involved a give and take between two parties:

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Interviewer: So, was it kind of sponsorship or did you feel that this supervisor put you on the path almost?

Clara: Absolutely [...] In other words, that supervisor was actually my mentor and to a certain degree I was a mentor to the other students

The concept of reciprocity as it is seen to operate within MA supervision questions the popular explanation of reciprocity as being structured around related economic exchange. Supervisory reciprocity does not lend itself to such neat pigeonholing. I argue that the type of reciprocity found in MA supervision is intrinsically linked to the development of trust and relational agency involving *"both drawing on the resources of others and being a resource for others"* (Edwards, 2005: 9). If supervisory reciprocity were presented in a diagrammatic model, it would appear as a lopsided sequence of gift exchange, with no balance or equitable exchange between the related parties (see figure 5.5). In fact, at first glance this pictorial representation does not show any evidence of reciprocity. Yet, if one takes into account the meaning of those "gifts" as returns for the one before, then the configuration can be understood as being imbued with relational agency. This can be observed in Clara's statement above were she does not give back directly to the supervisor, but back to the other students.
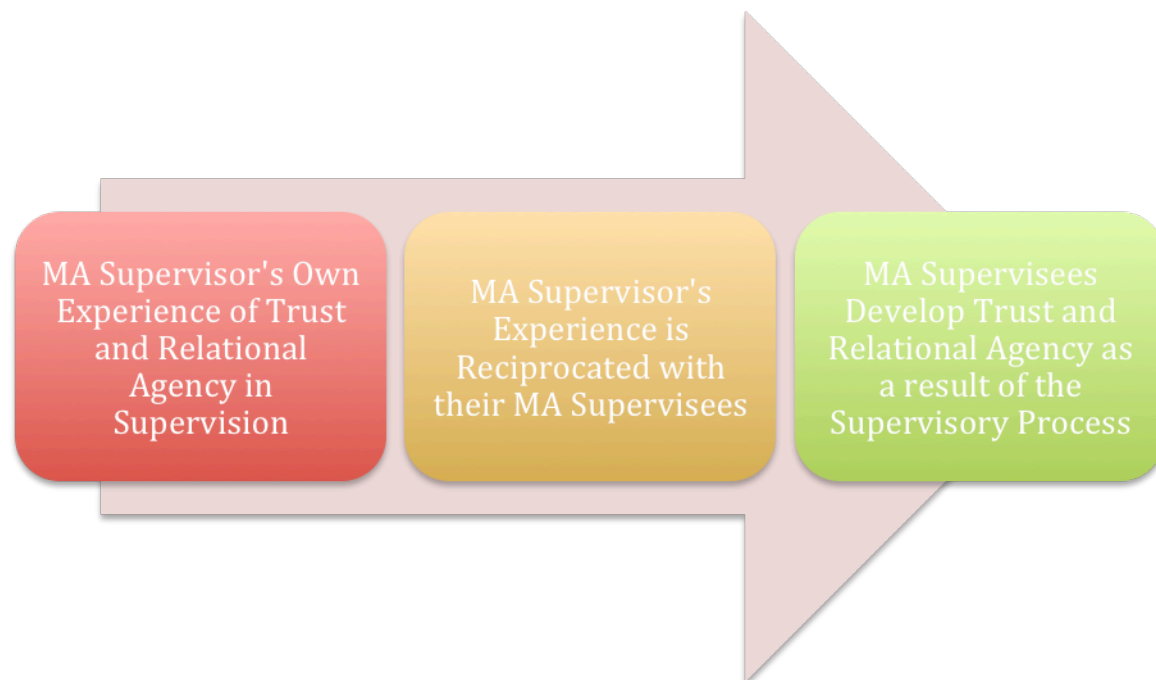
Figure 5.5: A Diagrammatic Representation of Supervisory Reciprocity in MA Supervision

Clara's becoming a supervisor is different from the others as she was actively mentored by a more experienced supervisor for a three year period before supervising on her own. She maintains that this was part of her own "professional development", meaning that she was allowed to sit in on supervision sessions, to contribute to them, yet at the same time having the support of another person who was more familiar with the topic under study and the dynamics of the sessions themselves.

Clara has been working in academia for 16 years both part-time and full-time, and has no less than nine qualifications after her name. This amounts to a personal testimony of a life that has been throughly invested in education. Her academic history is remarkably continuous. Yet, two experiences stand out for her as role defining. The first occurred when she maintained a dual role where she was a staff member of the university, while simultaneously undertaking another Masters degree. This gave her an insight into the two worlds at the same time – the experience of the student and the function of the staff. The second background experience that informed her supervisory style was her experiences with two different supervisors from two different disciplines and exemplifies how trust and relational agency are inherent in supervisory reciprocity:

> *I think very much the style of the supervisors, two separate supervisors under the two different types of programmes certainly had an influence on me in so far as, in both cases the supervisors were very keen to, I suppose, lead to a certain extent, to equip you to look towards research but then to roll back so you actually develop yourself and I suppose that would be my own approach as well (Clara, MA supervisor).*

A lesson learnt from both supervisors was the importance of the supervision meetings. A point that was repeatedly asserted was that these meetings needed to be relatively informal.

> *As a young student in my 20s, you know, I always felt comfortable knocking at someone's [her supervisor's] door, there was no degree of intimidation (Clara, MA supervisor).*

It is upon this base that the foundations for a healthy supervisory can be made. Yet, Clara noted that there was a difference between her MA and PhD supervisors' style – specifically the setting of dates for the completion of work. The MA supervisor tended to provide deadlines for the submission of work, whereas her PhD supervisor did not. Asking her about what she thought the difference between the two was, she answered that the PhD supervisor knew that sitting in front of him "was a person who had already completed a postgraduate degree", and therefore had an understanding of what research entailed and could work independently. Although the MA supervisory process is primarily an educational process, with an endpoint of learner autonomy, there can be no autonomus endpoint without trust and relational agency . This echoes Mounier's (1949/1969: 42) idea of the "positive interpersonal relationship" where a "reciprocal provocation" takes place "making them mutually fertile".

Many of the examples of supervisory reciprocity that supervisors described as occuring in their work resonate with the theories outlined in the current literature and offer considerable support for them. The role of "mentoring", the relationship between supervisor and supervisee, and the the emphasis on the personalities of both parties are all testimony to the importance of trust and relational agency to supervisory reciprocity as

documented in this thesis. Empathetic involvement described as *"support"*, *"trust"*, *"honesty"*, *"listening skills"*, *"encouragement"*, *"shared decision-making"*, and *"dialogue"*, are also highly consonant with the reciprocial process. Many aspects of academic supervision appear to have similarities with the educational type of reciprocity (Labelle, 1996), especially when it comes to the formation of supervisor identity with many supervisors mirroring the helping behaviours of their own supervisors.

However, there are some qualifications to be made of to these findings. First, there exists a marked degree of ambiguity in the descriptions of reciprocity and supervisory space as described by the participants. In fact, in the CHAT literature, it has been noted that the socio-cultural practice of relational agency within interacting activity systems is theoretically difficult to comprehend because "[t]he concrete location of individual subjects in social practice remains strangely implicit or ambiguous' (Dreier, 1999: 6). I have previously argued that the role of ambiguity and the role it plays in the supervision process is not given due recognition within the literature on supervision, and may prove to be a pivotal factor in both parties attempts to rationalise or put a defining narrative on their experiences in the MA supervisory relationship.

Second, the evidence of this study is that of reported and recollective data rather than longitudinally collected data. Given that such evidence comes from recollective accounts of individuals, it is also difficult to disentangle the marked *cultural* changes that have occurred in the supervision process from *biographical* changes in the life and career cycles of supervisors over time, when maturity and experience may bring more responsibilities, or procedural knowledge and hindsight.

Third, reciprocity in supervision may not impact on all supervisors in the same way. It may be felt particularly strongly by those supervisors who have been actively mentored themselves while they were being supervised and who may be more focused on the process of supervision than their colleagues, and it may be felt less so by others who may see it as part of their terms of employment.

These three qualifications do not disconfirm the supervisory reciprocity thesis, but they do raise doubts about its scope and singularity as an expanation of knowledge transfer within academic supervision, suggesting that further inquiry is needed in which other theories and perspectives beyond those on reciprocity may need to be acknowledged as adding to our understanding of the phenomenon of MA supervision

However, it must be stressed that supervisory reciprocity is qualitatively different from other types of reciprocity as outlined in the literature review, through its emphasis upon trust and relational agency. There are some parallels between supervisory reciprocity and the writings on reciprocity, specifically with the literature on the mutual strengthening of expertise to enhance the collective competence of a community (see Hakkarainen, Palonen, Paavola & Lehtinen, 2004). However an essential difference can be witnessed in its direct focus on the shared nature of the relationships that embody a network of academic expertise. Supervisory reciprocity also enables us to acknowledge the confluence of professional and personal factors that inform supervisory space and recognise how pre-existing personal understandings derived from other situations serve to mediate and order interpretations of new educational contexts (Edwards, 2005). This ordering of supervisory space will be the subject of the next section.

5.4 Regulating Supervisory Space

MA supervision implies a move away from the lecturer-centred instruction style of Third Level Education towards one in which the student supervisee has, or appears to have, more relational agency in negotiating educational decision-making, especially regarding his or her research activities, choice of topic and time investment (Lipowsky 2002). However, a possible repercussion associated with the creation of this new learning space is the inauguration of a new social order (Ryan, 2011), that may impact upon or influence existing social spaces outside of the supervisory relationship. Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2002) defines social order as occurring in a spatial situation where a factual arrangement of diverse entities (people, artifacts, organisms and things) come together to form a regulated nexus in practice, essentially "a set of doings and sayings" (Schatzki 1996:89; 2002: 73). Schatzki characterises a regulated nexus as being 'relatedness, meaning and mutual positioning' (Schatzki 2002: 38). Informed by Foucault's theory of power (Foucault 1976, 1987; Popkewitz and Brennan 2005; Ricken 2004) A regulated nexus can be interpreted as being a site of power generation. In contradistinction to the idea that

power is primarily exploitative, Schatzki argues that the power generated through a regulated nexus can be seen as both necessary and constructive.

Schatzki (2002) goes on to categorise four types of social relationship that characterize a regulated nexus: causal, spatial, intentional and prefigurative. Causal relationships entail 'making something happen' (Schatzki 2002: 41). Spatial relationships have two possible definitions. Firstly they may be 'objective' relationships of objects in physical space, whose positioning are usually communicated through the following terms: further from, closer to, next to, inside, outside, between. Secondly, they may evoke relationships, which are located in a 'activity-place-space' (Schatzki 2002: 43) through a kind of 'spacing in doing'. The second definition has parallels with the developmental model of academic supervision as outlined in Chapter 2 (see Brown et al., 2008). Intentional relationships result from a person's preconceived ideas, intentions and feelings held upon confronting an 'other' entity. Prefigurative relationships lay the foundations for future activity by limiting and/or capacitating other actions beyond the relationship. Prefigurative relationships come about when, not just activities, but the artifacts arising out of those activities have a transformative effect on the actors involved (Schatzki 2002: 45). An example of this is the production of the artifact of the MA thesis and the prefigurative effect that both the knowledge produced and the skills developed from engaging in the research experience may have on future projects undertaken by either the MA supervisor or the supervisee.

Spaces can have a pre-figurative effect on the activities that occur in the materiality of said space and this effect becomes more pronounced when the activities become suffused with meaning (Rieger-Ladich and Ricken, 2009). Spaces anticipate forms of presence-availability (Giddens, 1995). The 'spacing' of practices that are constructed by a community (such as that found in an academic research community), emulates and changes the symbolic encoding of the space inhabited and used by the members of that community. This assertion is supported by Lefebvre's (1991) theories on the construction of representational spaces, which are always composed according to certain standards and commissioned opportunities for identification. While issues pertaining to space are rarely

highlighted in the CHAT literature, the work of Goldstein (1999) proves to be a notable exception. She highlights that an inter-relational element is at play in negotiating educational zones of proximal development. Bearing these considerations in mind, we can illustrate how the space of MA supervision is a type of social order that generates and regenerates itself through the spacing and timing of certain practices.

We can distinguish this phenomenon by concentrating on how MA supervisors and supervisees relate to one another in their supervisory spaces and through the construction of academic artifacts. Recognising supervisory practices as *Lernkulturen* (learning cultures) (Kolbe et al. 2008) reveals an overlooked dialogical element within the relationship where subjects learn about themselves and things outside of themselves. If understood in this way, how supervisory space is ordered can be understood as pedagogical in nature. I aim to show in this section that the way in which supervisory space is temporally ordered is an important aspect that impacts upon the psychoactivity of the academic relationship.

5.4.1 The Temporal Ordering of Supervisory Space

Masters supervision is time-limited and the space of supervision is defined by the time spent together by the supervisor and supervisee. Time and space interact to inform the relational dynamics within MA supervision (see figure 5.6). Most Masters courses last one to two academic years. It is this fact that distinguishes it from other academic or professional relationships. Time shapes what a supervisor can do in supervision. It constrains what a supervisee hopes to realise in the course of their studies. Time dictates the pace of academic development, while simultaneously resisting the impetus of change. It is core to the supervisory relationship.
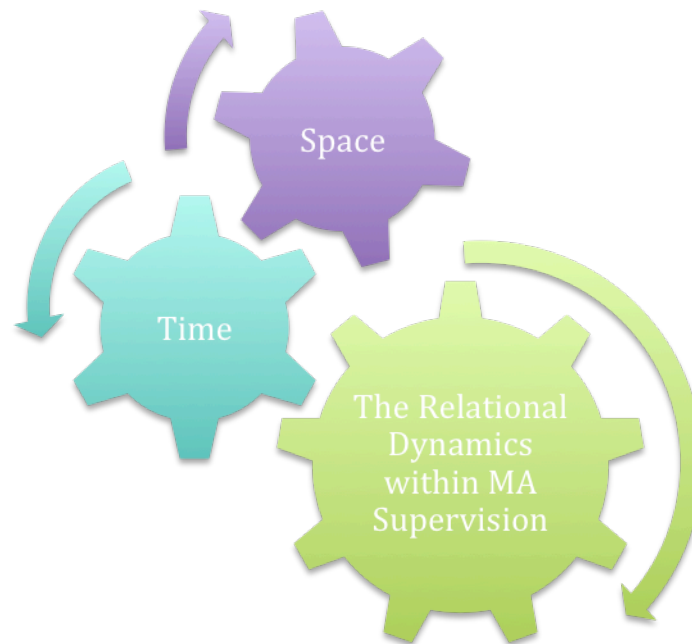
Figure 5.6: Time and Space in MA Supervision

Supervisors value their time. They experience it as a major limitation upon the development of their own and their supervisees' academic development. Here are some statements from MA supervisors on supervisory time:

> *Well when they come close to submission date, all of one's ways of doing this goes out the window of course, you know regularly up to the small hours of the morning reading chapters if they are sent in. This last year was particularly bad for that (Dylan, MA supervisor).*

> *Time is a huge thing because they need different [amounts], every person walking through the door needs a different configuration of that… some need more at the beginning. It just depends. It's mad (Caroline, MA supervisor).*

Supervisees place a different value on supervisory time. They tend to see it as in an economic sense in that it is an investment property in that time is invested in them by their supervisor, and they themselves invest time in an effort to attain the qualification.

> *I don't want to give massive time. Ehm I'm busy enough in school, it's a very busy time of year now but ehm when you know you have a life outside school and ehm there are times when you come home from your job as you know and*

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you don't want to, nah good luck. Ehm so it's not, it's certainly the choice I'm making (Simon, MA supervisee).

[I]t's not the case of rushing to get something done for the sake of having it done and to be on time. It's more about the reasons behind why certain things have to be done ahead of other chapters and things like that (Louise, MA supervisee).

First of all she [MA supervisor] is very prompt on the email and all of that, but basically what she does is following on from every meeting, she sends on the minutes of our discussion, saying what we talked about and saying when the next meeting will be and what do I have to have done for there, and then just saying again keeping in mind the general timeline for completion (Faulkner, MA supervisee).

The relationship of time to the MA supervision gains a more profound resonance if we understand it as being defined by the interaction that occurs within the supervisory dyad itself. Time is a basic structural element through which supervision is constructed and interpreted by the supervisor, the supervisee, their colleagues, their friends and families and by the academic organisation itself as it is seen to be tangible and measureable. Time for the two parties within the supervisory dyad is not just an impartial, exacting limitation but also a introspectively realised space full of promise and restraint. Both MA supervisors and supervisees can take time and make time, just as much as they are likely to see time as a type of reciprocal commitment, a boundary between life inside of and outside of work, or part of being a professional. Through the clock face of time, we can begin to see how both parties map and signpost the experience of supervision. Time is a major element in the *social ordering* of MA supervisory space (Ryan, 2011). Time structures the space of MA supervision and is in turn is structured by it. Time is therefore more than a minor managerial predicament, inhibiting or facilitating a supervisee's academic trajectory. Its characterisation and its dictates form a foundational part of what occurs within the MA supervisory dyad and the related activities that occur outside of the relationship.

The study focused not just on perceptions and uses of supervision time in particular, but also on the broader aspects of how this structuration of time impacted upon how the space created by the supervisory relationship was perceived by both parties within the

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dyad. This section attempts to cultivate understandings of how time is used as a way of structuring experiences within the MA relationship. References derived from the data are illustrative in character and were selected to highlight particular elements that arose out of the interviews and activity theory logs.There are two interrelated dimensions of time that I want to pick out for discussion, particularly as they are used to map the experience of MA supervision. They are Contractual Time and Quality Time (see figure 5.7).
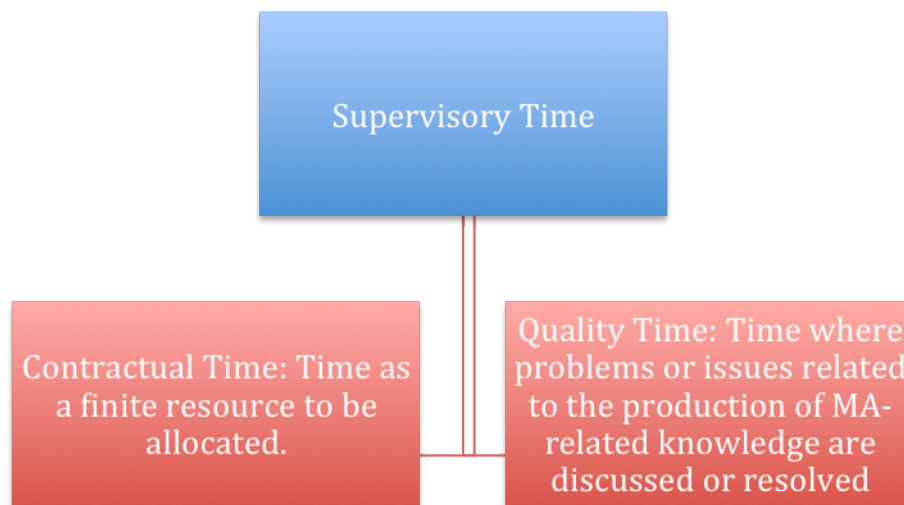
Figure 5.7: The Two Elements of Supervisory Time

5.4.2 Contractual Time

Within contractual dimension of time, time is a finite resource, which can be allocated, allotted and arranged, or spent, squandered and taken for granted. This dimension of time is dominant within most educational contexts that try to operate according to contemporary principles of rationalistic industry (Hargreaves, 2003). As a writers such as Menand (2009), Salbrekke and Karseth (2006), McWilliam (2004) claim and as I have argued in Chapter 4, current academic professionalism has been co-opted into the prevailing audit culture. Supervisory time does not escape this dictate. It has been argued that the aims and objectives of this time belong to bureaucratic institutional domains that seek to objectively measure the time allocated to supervision through learning outcomes (Brown, 2012) and, as we shall see in the following piece of transcript, this ignores completely the subjective relationship building aspect of supervision and the 'hidden work' of rewriting and correction.

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The only question with the learning outcomes, it can only ascertain the behavioural ones right, so what happens with the hidden ones, what happens with the extended learning that happens? How do you measure that? Where do you capture that? That's my big question. There's a lot more learning going on than you can pinpoint with just your learning outcomes (Caroline, MA supervisor).

Another element that arose in relation to contractual time is the dichotomy between implicit and explicit time. Implicit time is defined as being organic, where the supervisee submits work regularly with the supervisor duly responding at regular intervals throughout the year. This implicit time is an ideal construct, which rarely if ever happens. The reality is captured in the explicit time that supervisors dedicate to bulk marking and correcting and giving feedback that is influenced by cultural factors coming from the student and the pressures from their life outside of academia. This time is not recognized on an institutional level (Meyerhoff, Johnson, & Braun, 2011).

I'd like to see it as organic, unfortunately ehm, because you know the ideal student to work with is somebody who would submit work on a regular basis and you do have that kind of organic thing where you respond to the work and it works in incremental ways, so you know they will be the students who will look at the criticisms you might have made for their first chapter and those kind of problems won't appear in the second and they'll span out the argument properly, and in that case the supervision is staggered, the workload is staggered and you actually are the most use you can be to the student as well. But oftentimes unfortunately I know the students are under economic pressure to work and all the rest, ehm it happens that you'll end up with a great deal of work from a number of students all coming in at the same time, ehm, work that might not have even been put through a basic spelling grammar check on the computer, you know it would only take them a second to press that button but it might save the supervisor a couple of hours inserting a comment every time there is a problem (Dylan, MA supervisor).

The purpose of the space created by the supervisory dyad is to identify and dialogue about the potential uses for and allocations of this finite resource of time in order to facilitate the actualisation of desired educational goals. Yet, from an institutional perspective, contractual time is a rational bureaucratic construct that does not place a value on the qualitative aspects of how that time is spent.

Interviewer: Now supervisor's time, is it valued at an organisational level?

Caroline (MA supervisor): No.

Interviewer: And why do you think this is?

Caroline: It's hidden work. I see it very much as hidden work. It's just scholarly work and you are trying to train new scholars.

The ideas of visible and hidden work is an interesting conceptual lens through which to view the work of supervision. Given that, within the current Irish Higher Educational context, it is the amount of time spent in 'face-to-face' supervision meetings is currently negotiated outside of employment contracts. According to the supervisors interviewed, time allocated towards MA supervision time by employment contracts is at variance with the actual amount of time spent physically meeting supervisees, sending online or virtual communications and correcting their work. Even the time spent supervising one-to-one can be extremely variable.

There's the iceberg principle of hidden work with it. There's a lot of wasted time coming in to see a student who won't turn up, and sometimes won't let you know or left you a phone message or something like that. And sometimes supervision can last for hours. You could be with somebody easily for two hours, usually at the beginning of their thesis when they are discussing what they might do (Dylan, MA supervisor).

The idea of contractual time is also present in how MA supervisees perceive of how supervision should be.

Interviewer: Ok in your opinion what constitutes successful supervision?

Faulkner (MA supervisee): Ehm I suppose that... they [MA supervisors] sort of commit to the contract, so that if they have commitments, you know I'm going to commit to get this done for this date and I'm going to commit to correcting it by this date.

Here it is interesting to note that this supervisee's sense of supervisors' contractual commitments is somewhat limited to their context, specifically their commitment to the

student to help them get their dissertation in on time. There does not seem to be any conceptualisation of the 'hidden work' of supervision. Yet at the same time, there is recognition of the reciprocal nature of the relationship, especially in relation to commitment. It may be theorized that this points to a realization on the supervisee's part that supervision is a shared task that is dually undertaken by both parties.

The element of contractual time in the shared space of supervision is primarily limited due to it being a finite and an overtly rational- technical resource that needs to be spent wisely in order to achieve the desired goal of research production. What emerged most saliently, especially from the supervisors' point of view, was that there is, or ought to be, more to the time dedicated to supervision than contractual accountability. How supervision time is used and interpreted is also important. As we shall see, the implications of how time is qualitatively spent has much more of an impact upon supervisory space than contractual time. What became apparent from the data is that 'quality time' is perceived to have the greatest effect upon the formulation and reformulation of the space defined by the supervisory relationship.

5.4.3 Quality Time

The quality dimension of time is a determining factor in the formation of supervisory space not only in the salient areas of competent time management or productive uses of time for research purposes (Roberts, 2001; Hunt, 2011), but also in contributing to the recognised academic processes that affect the direction and tenor of the working partnership between the supervisor and supervisee. For Watsuji (1961: 9-10), the space that is made manifest through human relationships is inescapably bound to time:

> *Here the space- and time-structure of human existence is revealed as climate and history: the inseparability of time and space is the basis of the inseparability of history and climate. No social formation could exist if it lacked all foundation in the space-structure of man, nor does time become history unless it is founded in such social being, for history is the structure of existence in society.... it is from the union of climate with history that the latter gets its flesh and bones.*

Relating this insight back to MA supervision, Spear (2000), Heath (2002) and Manathunga (2005) have argued that the regular scheduling of supervisory meetings is particularly important for supervisee completion rates. In a similar vein, Seagram et al. (1998) have concluded that punctual feedback from the supervisor to the supervisee is a marker of effective supervision. Evidence from the data seems to suggest that quality time within a MA supervisory context not only engages on a social level, but also engages on an intersubjective level that contributes to the climate within the supervisory space.

> *Well ehm I would think that quality time probably would measure less in terms of time on the clock and more in terms of the actual issues and that ehm you would take that kind of bottom up approach, that you know starting where the student is at, you know constructivism really that you are starting where they are at and ehm ... addressing whatever the issues may be but may not necessarily coming to any answers and that's ok too because I think that is all part of the whole process (Clara, MA supervisor)*

Quality time here is characterised, not as a linear entity, but as a psychoactive space where problems or issues related to the production of knowledge are openly addressed. However, while it must be recognised that supervisory space can be used for this purpose, this space not entirely sufficient in this regard. This is evidenced in the quote below by a MA supervisee:

> *That was our, or I suppose it was my main agenda at our last meeting. I feel like I'm getting into it now so I want to know: 'Am I in the right stage?', 'Am I keeping track of time?' So we sort of had our two years broken down and I really feel that it is going was going to work out for me if I worked back from the end point, to have those milestones and to be aiming for them, is really helping me (Louise, MA supervisee).*

Here the research process for the supervisee is delineated according to contract time, but the rigidity of contract time is tempered by what she terms 'milestones', developmental markers of progress related to knowledge production and identity, which can be allied with the concept of quality time. It should be noted that a key difference between quality time and contract time that emerged from the data was that quality time involves a sense-

making of both the supervisory relationship and the process of doing research. In this sense quality time can be viewed as a contributing factor in the development of relational agency for the supervisee.

However, quality time may also have a negative impact upon the psychoactive space that constitutes MA supervision. This can be very clearly seen in the vignettes used to illustrate the emotional resonance of guilt. In the supervisor vignette entitled 'Could I have done more?', the supervisor expresses her guilt over not having enough quality time with her supervisee and worrying that this may impact upon the final academic product. Couple this with the corresponding supervisee vignette, 'Have I done enough?', and we see a similar emotion at play, where the supervisee feels guilty about falling behind on their schedule of work and possibly not living up to their supervisor's expectations. This goes to show that there is a strong emotional investment by both parties in the dyad in what constitutes quality time in MA supervision.

As we have seen previously, there is a confluence between personal and professional factors at play in MA supervision, this should not distract from the fact that the primary objective behind MA supervision is the production of a dissertation that meets certain identifiable academic standards. That is not to say that only contractual time or quality time matter in postgraduate supervision, rather that they constitute an underlying relational dynamic in the supervisory encounter.

5.5 *Micropolitics in Supervisory Space.*

Although contractual time and quality time can be witnessed within the supervisory encounter, it should also be noted that there is another dynamic that has a major impact upon the psychoactivity associated with supervisory space. I choose to call this *a micropolitical purpose.*

In MA supervision, it has been shown that space and time are interrelated. However, there is also a micro-political resonance to be recognized here as well in that both

supervisors and supervisees occupy spaces that have specific climates that inform their specific histories. This micro-political resonance arises out of the temporal, historical aspect of supervisory space that is most clearly seen in the developmental framework that informs supervisory space (Swanwick, McKimm, & Clarke, 2010). In the words of a MA supervisor:

> *The first time, it's a formal meeting to start with and then you know find out a little bit about them, get them to submit something and see what the level of work is like and then say right let's move from there. I mean I have worked with ehm and I spoke to you about before about that, I've worked with people where they are at difficult points in their lives, I've met them off campus, whatever is necessary to try and work with them at their level and I gauge that quite quickly at the first meeting that I might need to do this (Caroline, MA supervisor).*

However, an interesting phenomenon arose out of the temporality that informs the structuring of supervisory space. Although the actual experience of supervision has been theorised as a present practice, meaning it is presented as a series of 'nows' where supervisor and supervisee interact and engage towards the fulfillment of a particular goal (Bærenholdt, Gregson, Everts, Granås, & Healey, 2010). If one understands MA supervision as being a relational space that is created between two social actors then the following insight from Heidegger gains a clearer relevance: "[It is] a unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been (1962: 374)." Grounding this in the context supplied by MA supervision, it may be argued that within the space provided by the supervisory encounter, the present, past, and future of both parties in the dyad compliment one another. This leads us to recognise that we cannot think of the 'present' that is experienced in MA supervision without taking into consideration how past history and future aspirations inform this space. This is most saliently observed in the micropolitical dynamics that inform supervisory space.

The meaning of the term 'micropolitical' cannot be circumscribed to conflicts and how social actors, for reasons of self-interest or protection, exert authority or influence. It should also be recognised that the term also encompasses cooperation and collaboration, and the support people give one another in order to meet certain future orientated

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objectives. It has been theorised by several authors that micropolitical relationships are primarily premised upon the use of formal power (authority, expertise) and at other times they are based on mutual trust (collegiality, friendship) (Unsworth, Turner, Williams, & Piccin-Houle, 2010). It is interesting to note that in the MA relationship, future orientated goals seem to contain both formal and informal power elements. This is evidenced by both parties recognition that the power and the "management" of the relationship are informed by "support", "ownership" and "the recognition of potential".

Blase and Blase (2002: 9) provide a clear-cut definition of micropolitics as located in the present by referring "to the immediate, ongoing, dynamic interaction between and among individuals", which they claim can be found in all strata of education. Analogously, engagement with MA research connotes an involvement with the micropolitics that inform academic life. The decisions that both parties make at all the developmental stages that make up MA research can be said to contain both moral and political implications. Power is always implicit in MA supervision, but it is rarely acknowledged in conversations about MA research. But it is the collaborative aspect of power, which informs supervisory space, that appears to have a paradoxical interactional dynamic; where a supervisee's power to creatively interpret and create an academic text is in dialogue with and somewhat limited by the authoritarian power exercised by the supervisor and the HE organisation. This can be witnessed below:

> *Dylan (MA supervisor): I think there is a caring element and there's also a pragmatic element to it... I think that there is a human element but there is also a kind of a professional element of nurturing the better people if we want them to carry on with us.*
>
> *Interviewer: So it's kind of professional nurturing?*
>
> *Dylan: I think we have to look ahead as well and say will this person maybe finish this so that they might come back into the system*

The position taken by Blase and Blase (1997) is discordant with a conceptualization of educational micropolitics that prioritises conflict and treats consensus as an exception to the rule. In their research, which investigates the micropolitical strategies school leaders

use to achieve school goals; they advance the claim that "micro-politics deals with the realm of cooperative (i.e., collaborative, collegial, consensual, democratic) as well as conflictive forms of interaction in organizational settings" (1997: 138). This position is echoed by Achinstein (2002) in her pioneering case studies of American middle schools, where she argues that conflicts give educationalists the opportunity to look at learning environments as they are and decide what they can become. These insights can also serve our purposes as they give credence to the argument that conflict and consensus within MA supervision provides a framework for analysis, organizational learning, and the development of insight.

Analogously, in the course of the data analysis, conflict emerged as an emotional resonance that was interpreted differently be MA supervisors and supervisees. A sample of these different interpretations can be found in Table 5.2 in the vignettes illustrating the emotional resonance behind conflict in MA supervision. The vignette entitled 'The one-way conversation', the supervisor gives voice to her frustration at supervisees who turn up to supervision sessions without having done any related work beforehand and expecting the supervisor "to do all the work". This was interpreted by the MA supervisor as wasting "my time", which could be spent on more productive projects. Again a more personal interpretation arises out of the related supervisee vignette 'Favouritism'. Where conflict similar to rivalry emerged, not between supervisor and supervisee, but between supervisees themselves due to an email addressed to some but not all supervisees. As a result, it was claimed that sometimes supervisors play favourites, giving more attention to some supervisees over others.

This emphases Achinstein's (2002) argument where she proposed that where supervisors and supervisees come together to create a dialogical space where differences can be aired, mutual understanding achieved, and innovation enabled by divergent thinking, where conflict becomes constructive for the both the relationship and the general disciplinary community of practice (see Achinstein, 2002: 2-3). This assertion is mirrored in the following piece of transcript:

Well I suppose I always come back to developing a relationship. I will always come back to that because I feel if you don't have that, there are so many things that you might miss out on. We've talked about empathy, but you know also there is the whole notion that a person can be many many many things and if we just have that sort of transactional relationship with a student, that we miss out on certain areas that we might be able to help develop for the person (Clara, MA supervisor).

Even if we define the concept and phenomenon of micropolitics within the space afforded by the supervisory encounter as relational and interactional, there is still the tendency within the literature to ally the exertion of power with either the supervisor or the supervisee (Beddoe, 2012; Green & Dekkers, 2010). This research found that the micropolitics that inform MA supervision tend to be fluid in the sense that at any given moment the power position can rest with either party. A key element that informs the micropolitical currents within the MA supervisory dyad seems to congregate around the issue of what constitutes "quality work" in MA supervision. This applies to both the MA supervisor and the supervisee. We see from the supervisor perspective that quality is interwoven with how they do their job in a professional capacity:

[I]t's all about them and that's what I say to them. It's all about you getting this, a high quality piece of work that's worthwhile for you, that should be relevant to your own work day and should be relevant to what you do on a day to day basis and that's my only interest is to get you through that. And some of them will get there and some of them won't, but there you go (Dylan, MA supervisor).

Gale and Kitto (2003) have written a great deal on this phenomenon and they argue that the economy of quality assurance and the audit culture that is found in Higher Education, necessitates that knowledge workers pursue a lifelong learning process that entails a continuous up-skilling and re-skilling. Morley (2005) furthers this position by claiming that it is doubtful that recognisable subject positions are applicable to academics when, in the current climate, identity is invariably in flux and value is related to productivity rather than creativity. This is what she terms "the psychic economy of quality assurance" (Morley, 2003). It can be seen in the data collected that this psychic economy of quality assurance also pervades the psychoactive space of MA supervision especially when it

comes to performance indicators such as academic writing, referencing skills and application of methodology.

From the previous quote, we can see that MA supervision operates as a lightening rod for the effects of the performance culture that has come to characterise academic life. McWilliam (2004: 159) gives voice to this dynamic:

> *One of the most difficult issues for academics to address is that it is not possible for anyone to sit outside the performance culture and still be a valued player in a particular area of university activity.*

This is readily witnessed in the way in which supervisors "regulate and define themselves in relation to dominant performance indicators" (Morley, 2005: 84), but it should also be noted that this performance is also regulated and defined by the supervisees as well.

> *Well I suppose when people go in [to MA supervision] they have an idea of what they want to know, but they don't literally just say you know tell me this. I would sort of say I was thinking of doing this you know or do you think that would be a good idea or that sort of thing and she would tell me if it is or not. (Faulkner, MA supervisee)*

This echoes the finding in Chapter 4, where it was found that power boundaries inform MA supervisees' academic identity. It may be advanced that the construction of power boundaries are a way of negotiating the micropolitics that emerge out of the supervisory relationship. A further elaboration comes from Hart (1997: 305) who claims "everyone needs a voice of contradiction somewhere, which may also be a voice of conscience, to keep them up to the mark". One gets the sense that the "mark" or the "grade" is the elephant in the room when one speaks of postgraduate supervision. The 'mark' in supervision has a dual connotation, and represents the 'mark' that the supervisee receives for his/her academic work as well as the 'mark' given to the supervisor for the quality of their contribution to the relationship. In the words of an MA supervisee:

> *Interviewer: How do you know that you have had a successful MA? What matters to you at the end of the day?*

Faulkner: At the end of the day it's the grade.

Interviewer: It's the grade? Ok.

Faulkner: Yeah I'd say most people would, well I'd, in terms of the MA in general like if you enhanced your interest in the subject and maybe that you made new friends who were interested in the same things as you. Eh and eh you kind of knew what you wanted to do afterwards. And the grade.

And the MA supervisor:

I've had gorgeous testimonials from them and things like that in terms of how they felt the process has gone and how surprised they were at how well they've done or whatever... it's lovely when somebody acknowledges. They don't, like even I mean as a teacher when somebody just steps out from the fray and says that's very nice. That doesn't happen very often (Caroline, MA supervisor).

I think that for me it is important to walk away from a student when they are finished and say there's no more I could have done. (Clara, MA supervisor).

It is interesting to note that the hegemonic implications of how the 'mark' is composed within the MA supervisory space are generally left untheorised despite the emphasis upon "effective supervision" in the literature. Although both parties inhabit the same space, this research found that it is a characteristic of supervisory space that it is never clear how one is actually evaluated by either party. MA supervisees tended to evaluate according to the mark received, whereas the MA supervisors tended to evaluate according to set academic norms that may be based upon professional judgment or subjective rationalising.

A related issue that emerged from the data was who in the relationship is qualified to decide what quality work is and how this quality is valued and audited.

[Supervisees] need to be [future orientated] because this may be a pathway, where they go beyond the MEd or whatever they are doing right, so it's a bigger picture thing, that if some of your students may go further, they need to have the highest quality experience with you (Caroline, MA supervisor).

Note here that an emphasis is placed upon quality of experience not parity of esteem. Writers on the area of Higher Education have noted that academic work (including postgraduate supervision) is beginning to resemble the type of work found in the service industries. A cultural turn that is being met with a conspicuous pusillanimity by those effected by the change (Morley, 2005). Although quality academic work and parity of esteem can sometimes exist simultaneously in MA supervision, usually the conflation of the two elements occurs when the PhD is undertaken. But this convergence of concepts within MA supervision points to the micropolitical actions embedded in these concepts, specifically regulation and surveillance of identity in the managed university. A point that will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.1 Control in MA Supervision
The MA supervisory relationship could best be described as a benign dictatorship. Although supervisors tend to speak of 'dialogue', and 'partnership', the reality is that there is an asymmetry at the heart of academic supervision. Although, supervisors and supervisees talk about the relationship in egalitarian terms, there is still an imbalance, which is firmly weighted by the issue of control. This goes some way towards explaining why there seems to be an aversion to describing the supervisory dyad as a 'friendship'. Friendship naturally entails a two-way transfer of asset (Buber, 1994). However, in MA supervision this cannot take place. Although the knowledge needed for the creation of the product (the final thesis) is created through dialogue, it is the supervisor who appraises the actual value of the product produced by the student. In this sense, the relationship is hierarchical and cannot be taken as an exemplar of friendship. This does not negate the dialogical nature of the relationship, nor does it take from the collaborative creation of knowledge. Instead, it points to a core contradiction that informs the relationship found in the MA supervisory dyad. As Dylan, an MA supervisor, discloses:

> *I think there being dialogue. The student has ideas and you might help them refine them, complicate them, simplify them whatever is needed. And they take on board what they think is useful, not necessarily in a passive way, just doing everything that you say, but in a reciprocity, I think that constitutes successful supervision.*

Here the reciprocity of supervision is emphasized. Dialogue is key to the approach, with the student providing the ideas and the supervisor refining them, but ultimately the student can take or leave the advice. Yet, underneath this reciprocal dialogue the supervisor has to remain in control of the process:

> *Dylan: Yeah, I think you have to break down the us and them thing a lot of our students would still have, even at MA level, but at the same time, I suppose you have to be the one in control of the whole process. Sometimes that means having to yank the chain, you know, you have to email people and say that listen you've missed three meetings now...*
>
> *Interviewer: ... you need to step up...*
>
> *Dylan: Yeah...*
>
> *Interviewer: So is it like the teacher scolding the bold child at some stages?*
>
> *Dylan: I suppose there can be a little bit of that. Although at this level, we would feel that the burden of responsibility is on the student, you know, we cannot make people submit their chapters, turn up for meetings. You know it's rare that someone would give us that level of persistent trouble.*

There seems to be a difficulty in leaving the personae developed in the arena of the lecture hall, were all variables are controllable and it is a solo performance of one main actor. A shift occurs when performance is transferred to the arena of supervision, where this sense of control is no longer there and the performance involves two social actors where, a bit like riding a tandem bike, both parties must perform in order to make the journey a pleasurable one. For Dylan, although on a surface level the responsibility lies with the supervisee, ultimately the onus of accountability is felt to lie with the supervisor.

An inherent paradox emerges when we take into account the supervisee vignette entitled 'Baiting the hook' illustrating the emotional resonance of control (see table 5.1). Building upon the findings from the chapter 4 related to the power and performance boundaries of MA supervisees, it may be argued that supervisees also exert power over supervisors, albeit in an unrecognized way. As witnessed in the aforementioned vignette, supervisees

may choose to exercise control in supervision by proposing a topic that is a certain supervisor's area of expertise, so as to increase their chances of being allocated that supervisor. This is not based solely upon an interest in the topic, but also to do with the compatibility of the supervisor's personality with their own. This goes to show that power in MA supervision does not solely rest with the supervisor, but can also be actively manipulated by the MA supervisee.

During the initial stages of supervision, it was found that the two parties attempt to 'get to know one another', create a 'rapport', and to create a connection upon which the academic elements needed to write a thesis can be built upon. This can be termed the pastoral role of supervision, where the supervisors attempt to look after their supervisees and to allay any anxieties that they may have. This is very much the human face of supervision, and tends to be de-emphasized in the literature as perhaps it contrasts a little bit too sharply with the conservative orthodoxy associated with the homo academicus of Bourdieu's writings (1988). Yet, this pastoral role is contra-balanced by the omnipresent task role that exhibits itself especially in the Masters qualification:

> *I see my role [as a supervisor] as just batting around ideas, giving them things to read. It's huge in that you have your pastoral role... minding them, looking after them... then you'd have your task role, where you'd be trying to improve their writing style, their research skills, data collection... (Caroline, MA supervisor).*

There is a dissonance at the heart of what role the supervisor plays in postgraduate supervision, specifically, between their pastoral role and their task role. One is not entirely distinct from the other, as the type of reciprocity found in this relationship is geared towards a specific goal or objective. In addition to this there is a definite endpoint at which the relationship will terminate, which also affects the tenor of the alliance. The task role for the supervisor is not the intrinsic reward that motivates a supervisor to do their job to the best of their ability, but what is repeatedly emphasized is the role played by the supervisory process. The process of supervision has been described by the supervisors I have interviewed as a *"nurturing process", "seeing the student grow",* and impacting upon *"a person's practice"*. This is in marked contrast to the mechanics of the

process that is repeatedly emphasized in the supervision literature, in fact the emphasis upon the meaning of the experience seems to have more in common with the literature on mentoring than academic supervision.

Although the importance of dialogue and communication were continually emphased in the findings, one should also be aware that these positions can also characterise the dominant discourses that inform the distribution of social power and hierarchical structures in society and in organisations (McWilliam, 2004). In applying this insight to MA supervisory space, we could bear witness to a coercive accountability that may limit democratic engagement in research (Eilertsen et al., 2008). However, the findings from the data counter indicate these claims. In point of fact, MA supervision was defined by both supervisors and supervisees as being an "enabling" space, which was home to the manufacture of new possibilities. Indeed, there seems to be a marked parallel between how this behaviour was described and how Brown et al. (2008) defines mentoring behaviour.

> *There is a kind of a fine line if you know what I mean, that you are more kind of an enabler rather than the buddy if you know what I am trying to say. (Clara, MA supervisor)*

This enabling behaviour can be viewed as a micro-political act as it entails evaluating the quality of MA supervisee's capabilities and their suitability for academic research. The MA supervisees in their appraisal of the supervisory experience mirror this evaluating behaviour. This alternating flow of judgment between supervisor and supervisee can be theorised as being similar to Foucault's (1980) notion of capillary power where professions are seduced into self-monitoring behaviour. Drawing upon this insight, it could be argued that the power that informs the MA supervisory space is reliant upon social capital (Raza, Hashmi, Zeeshan, Shaikh, & Naqvi, 2011). Therefore, it is open to inclusions and exclusions that can both strengthen or weaken academic power relations. In this sense, it may be argued that the identities that inform MA supervisory space come about through the inclusion or exclusion of particular research ideas, practices, and methods and are mediated through an alternating flow of micro-political power dynamics.

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However, the power relations associated with MA supervision remain largely untheorised, especially in the nascent CHAT literature. Englebretson et al. (2008) suggest that the majority of the literature published on postgraduate supervision focuses upon how it should be implemented. Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, the induction of novice researchers can also represent a form of threat and danger as their externality makes them 'Other ' to the existing academic community of practice. Because MA supervisees are 'other' to accepted research practices, they may contribute to, rather than reduce risk, and as Mary Douglas (1990) notes the modern concept of risk has become synonymous with invasion. Analogously, the academic supervisor, in perceiving academic work and identity as something to be protected from risk/invasion, places a key emphasis upon quality as a way of protecting the supervisory space from ambiguity and the encroachment of those who are 'other' to the relevant discipline (McWilliam, 2004), but at the same time needs the space to be nurtured by new ways of thinking provided that they are applicable to the relevant context and acceptable to an academic audience. So we could claim that the psychoactive space of knowledge and identity creation associated with MA supervision occupies a uniquely hybrid positioning that is a characteristic of the 'In-between' (Donald & Mackie, 2009). A position that is simultaneously both inside and outside of the academic community

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter draws attention to the dynamics at play within the psychoactive space created by postgraduate supervision. At this time of writing very little attention has been given to the idea of supervisory space, with most research on postgraduate supervision overlooking this area in favour of macro concerns such as stakeholder interests, funding and the global education market. Although these are relevant issues, I argue that in order to understand and evolve postgraduate supervisory practice we need to become aware of the microelements that operate in the space created by the relationship between supervisor and supervisee.

In summary, postgraduate supervision cannot be separated from the space that it creates for itself. It is imperative that both supervisors and supervisees come to acknowledge how this negotiated space is both structured and limited, and that in so doing they may find alternative mays of facilitating the supervisory process and enabling academic identity.

It is more than a little ironic that as more and more students embark on postgraduate study, there is still no coherent conceptual framework to frame the experience of being supervised and supervising a postgraduate qualification. This raises quite a number of issues for both supervision and the Higher Education system. Therefore, I claim that it is critical that this area be thoroughly investigated, despite the fact that as academics turning the analytical lens back on themselves may initially prove to be unsettling. In the following chapter, I will attempt to rectify this oversight by outlining CHAT as a framework for understanding MA supervision and proposing that a hidden outcome of the MA supervisory dyad is the disciplined improvisation of academic identity.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Riffing On Research: MA Supervision, CHAT and the Disciplined Improvisation of Academic Identity.

There's nothing that makes you so aware of the improvisation of human existence as a song unfinished. Or an old address book.

- *Carson McCullers*

Chapter Outline	
Introduction	Relational dynamics in postgraduate supervision
The Hidden Outcome of MA Supervision	The Disciplined Improvisation of Academic Identity
Understanding MA supervision	CHAT as a framework for understanding MA supervision from a relational perspective.
Implications for Theory and Practice	- Academic Identity as a Disciplined Improvisation - The Use of an AT-influenced methodology - The contribution to Fourth Generation CHAT
Reflections	My Journey as a Doctoral Researcher

6.0 Introduction: Relational Dynamics in Postgraduate Supervision

This study sought to map the relational dynamics that inform the MA supervisory relationship in the Humanities, but it also uncovered a hidden outcome of this relationship: the disciplined improvisation of academic identity. This chapter will elucidate this concept further by using CHAT as a theoretical framework.

For the past number of decades postgraduate supervision has come under increased focus and investigation by Higher Education scholars (Unsworth, Turner, Williams, & Piccin-Houle, 2010; de Beer & Mason, 2009; McCallin & Nayar, 2012). The reasons behind this increased consideration given to postgraduate supervision are diverse and manifold. Specifically in the Irish Higher Educational context, some of the changes in supervisory practice have been brought about by shifts in student demographics (Higher Education Authority, 2006), structural changes in how postgraduate courses are delivered (Bowman, 2005) and organizational changes that value particular types of knowledge, skills and competencies (Zeegers & Barron, 2012) These cultural shifts in the academic landscape go some way towards explaining the burgeoning interest in supervisory practices.

However, despite the popularity of postgraduate supervision in academic discourses, the emphasis tends to be laid upon effective supervision strategies rather than the relational dynamics that inform the practice. In this chapter, I argue that a neglected outcome associated with MA supervision is the disciplined improvisation of academic identity and that there needs to be a theoretical grounding of the relational dynamics that inform academic supervision in order to ensure the effectiveness of supervisory strategies.

For this research, I choose to focus upon Masters (MA) supervision in particular for the following reasons:

- MA supervision has not received due recognition in the literature on postgraduate supervision.
- A focus on MA supervision enabled the research to trace the developmental trajectory of postgraduate relationships over the course of one academic year.

Postgraduate supervision is commonly defined in the literature as pertaining to the commodification of knowledge (McWilliams & Taylor, 2001), academic apprenticeship (Malfroy, 2005), supervisory pedagogy (Englebretson, 2008; Manathunga, 2005) and expertise (Heath, 2002). Writing on postgraduate supervision over the past number of decades has tended to focus upon PhD students rather than MA students (Brigley & Robbé, 2005; Morrison, Rudd, Picciano, & Nerad, 2011). A possible explanation of this could be that the PhD is seen to hold more academic prestige as it is related to the creation of professionals, whereas the MA is seen to have a vocational employment aspect and is seen to serve the professions (Unsworth, Turner, Williams, & Piccin-Houle, 2010). However, it is far too simplistic to limit supervisory behaviour to either one of the above definitions without making reference to the supervisory relationship itself.

It may be argued that the insights found in the literature on supervision may be further developed by a more focused investigation of how identities are formed in the supervisory relationship. In 2009, Geller and Foley formulated a new mentoring model that takes into account the developmental stages that a supervisory relationship goes through and the mentoring behaviours that are inherent in such a relationship. In doing this they drew attention to the role played by identity formation within such contexts. A major insight that emerged from this research was that the professional relationship does not only operate on a commodity/apprenticeship/pedagogical/expertise level, but also operates on a relational and reflective one. By marrying the insights developed in the literature on postgraduate supervision and the writings on mentoring relationships, I hope to evolve a deeper understanding of the relational dynamics in MA supervision.

It should be noted that all academic supervisory relationships in the Humanities are unique and therefore it may be impossible to find two relationships that are completely similar even within the same disciplinary area. However, this does not preclude the fact that there may be recognizable relational dynamics that inform how both parties relate to one another in the MA supervisory dyad. I argue that applying cultural- historical activity theory (CHAT) as an orienting conceptual framework for MA supervisory practice may enable HE researchers, postgraduate supervisors and possibly supervisees to better

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understand the way in which this particular educational partnership shapes academic identity, engages different learning styles and promotes the development of specific context-dependent insights.

6.1 The Hidden Outcome of MA Supervision: The Disciplined Improvisation of Academic Identity

It is so obvious, that it is overlooked. The hidden outcome of MA supervision is the formation of a shared space, where academic identities can be creatively improvised through the interaction of both parties within the disciplinary perimeters of the MA dyad. Berliner (1994: 241) characterizes improvisation as follows:

> *Improvisation involves reworking precomposed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped and transformed under the special conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation.*

Although improvisation has been generally theorized through the medium of jazz (Haidet, 2007), the concept is an apt metaphor for describing the relational processes that contribute to identity in Masters supervision in the Humanities. Understanding the creation of academic identity for both supervisor and supervisee as a type of improvisation arising out of the supervisory encounter enables us to theorise how the execution and composition of each parties' supervisory performance is specifically located in a socio-cultural time and space.

However, it must be highlighted that MA supervision is not entirely improvisational, as it has been shown in the research findings that both supervisors and supervisees make use of various strategies to structure their experience of MA supervision. Bearing this in mind, it should be made clear that the type of improvisation of academic identity found in the MA supervisory dyad is not free form, but is characterized by a disciplined structure of academic professionalism and practice. Therefore, it can be best described as a *disciplined improvisation of academic identity*. This term grew organically out of the research data. While the term, disciplined improvisation, has been used by Sawyer (2004)

to portray collaborative discussion in teaching, the term remains somewhat underdeveloped.

Defining the supervisory encounter as a disciplined improvisation of academic identity highlights the temporality of the experience, accentuates the creation of academic identity, and forefronts the amount of simultaneity that occurs between the composition of strategy, its eventual implementation and its psychoactive consequences. What emerges here is that reflection on what transpires within the encounter is applied to the conceptualization and practice of academic activity, which in turn informs the academic identities of both parties within MA supervisory space. For example:

> *The supervisor I had for my work is still my friend, my co-researcher, my everything. It can be a bigger thing. They have a very significant influence on a career point for people. They can either just consolidate where they are… or they can really push someone on or reinforce things about them, or give maybe permission to do something a little bit different. So they've a significant influence really (Caroline, MA supervisor)*

We can observe in the above quote that Caroline's supervisor had a significant impact upon both her academic identity, career and how she orientates towards the process of doing research. Yet, there is no guarantee that the postgraduate supervisory experience will have always have a positive transformative effect, which points to the inherent risk that shapes the disciplined improvisation of academic identity and has been previously recognized as being a central motivating factor in supervisees' boundary work (see chapter 4).

Unpacking the term disciplined improvisation reveals a number of important connotations that serve to clarify the relational dynamics at the heart of MA supervision. Firstly the term 'discipline' can simultaneously refer to a domain of knowledge, the practice through which one attains knowledge and creates an identity, as well as the power dynamics present in MA supervision. Secondly, the concept of improvisation encompasses the creative give and take interactions that occur in supervision, the

serendipitous innovation at the heart of research, and how each participants' identity is formed organically in relation to the Other in MA supervision.

The disciplined improvisation of academic identity proves to be an apt metaphor for describing the relational dynamics in MA supervision, as it serves to locate the improvisation of academic identity within a specific institutional context driven by discipline-specific knowledge constructs and frameworks (Sawyer, 2004). Studies have shown that educationalists, who are expert in their field, use routines and activity structures more than those who are novices to the area. A defining feature of expert practice is that they are able to importune and to implement these routines in an innovative and improvisational fashion (Mapes, 2011). I argue that it is these routines, structures and strategies married with the improvisational interactions of the supervisory encounter results in the identity-defining activity of postgraduate supervision (see figure 6.1).
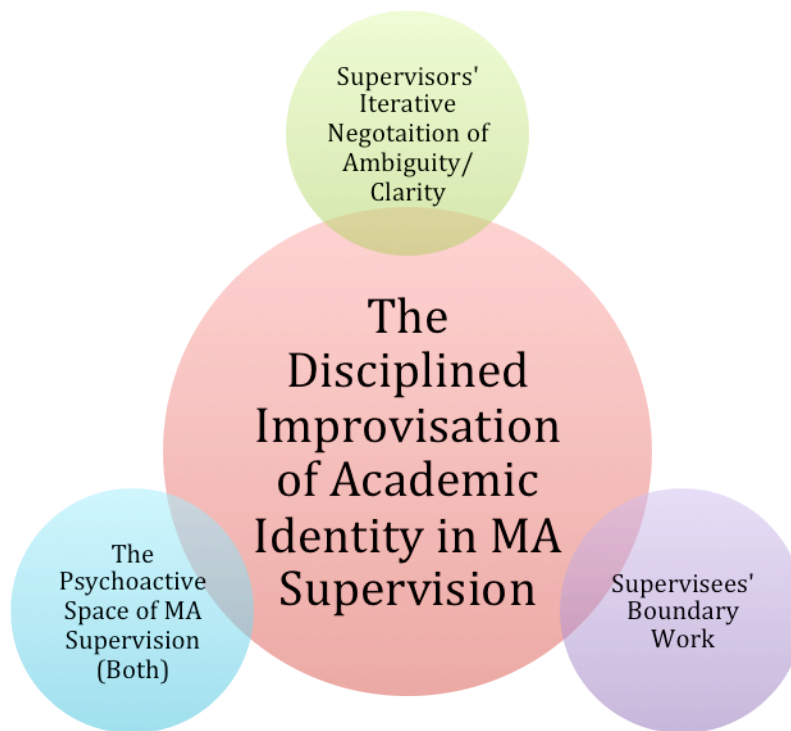
Figure 6.1: Elements contributing to the disciplined improvisation of academic identity in MA supervision.

It may be argued that the key findings from chapters 4 and 5, specifically MA supervisors' iterative negotiation of ambiguity/clarity, MA supervisees' boundary work and the psychoactive space of supervision contribute to the disciplined improvisation of academic identity in MA supervision. Both the supervisors' iterative negotiation of ambiguity/clarity and the supervisees' boundary work can be seen as an attempt to individually structure the experience of MA supervision. Yet, it emerged from the data that these attempts to cognitively discipline the supervisory experience were thrown into flux when supervision was lived out in reality. The supervisory encounter between supervisor and supervisee resulted in the creation of a shared psychoactive space, characterized by emotional resonances that conflicted with participants' attempts to cognitively discipline their responses to supervision. This in turn caused both participants in the MA dyad to question and their existing academic identities and to improvise new identities in response to the other party in the relationship (see figure 6.2).

Another way of conceptualizing the disciplined improvisation of academic identity is through Sawyer's (2003) term *collaborative emergence*. The term was originally used to describe the discourses that arise out of improvised theatre dialogues. Both MA supervision and theatre improvisations can be described as emergent as the outcome cannot be expressed in advance, and they are collaborative because no individual participant can solely define what emerges out of the partnership; the outcome is determined by the interactions that occur between the participants as a whole. To demonstrate some important characteristics of collaborative emergence, I include the following example:

> *With the whole role as a supervisor you get to see the person's kind of trajectory over time and I think that's very rewarding as well and you knowing as well the person [and] also knowing that you made an input along the way. […] But I also think it's beneficial for you as almost teacher and mentor that you're actually being challenged and you know perhaps there are things that you are thinking, how can I articulate this best to the person, how can I actually help this person to develop, is what I'm seeing as something negative actually negative or not? You know and sort of teasing that out as well. I think that's part of our own professional development (Clara, MA supervisor).*

The direction the research may take or the resulting performance of identity cannot be reduced to a single actor's intent in the supervisory relationship. This is because in many cases the supervisor or supervisee cannot know the meaning of their actions until the other person has responded. As with any type of improvisational activity, meaning is always in retrospect. This is especially the case in MA supervision, where statements, suggestions, thoughts and dialogues only make sense after they occur, are processed and are made meaningful through action. In postgraduate supervision, as in life, clarity is always in hindsight. MA supervisors stress that it is only after the supervision session that they have a chance to reflect upon what they "could have done better or differently". Similarly with MA supervisees who claimed that undertaking research for an MA involved a "testing of the academic waters" and a "seeing if it suited me", but these thoughts tended to emerge after supervision sessions or following the completion of a given piece of work.

Indeed it may be argued that the dialogue that arises out of the disciplined improvisational performances of academic identity found within the supervisory encounter allows the creation of possibility that leads to creativity, innovation and the transformation of subjects' activity systems. If we hold that improvisation is at the heart of academic supervision, then the learning that occurs within it is primarily a social activity to be shared not alone with those who participate within the dyad, but with a broader community of practice. Through enabling a space that is conducive to improvisation, the supervisor creates a dialogue with their supervisees, thus giving them the freedom to be inspired to construct their own knowledge, while simultaneously facilitating the relational and structural elements that effectively frame the co-constructive process of academic learning.

The interaction that occurs in the supervisory encounter can be understood as being multivocal in that it contains manifold frames of reference rather than the exclusive "right" perspective of the supervisor. The data revealed that the supervisor and supervisee's objectives are not entirely compatible and tend to be motivated differently. Despite this fact, the interaction between both parties was found to reciprocally influence

individual arguments and modes of thought, and the enablement of conceptual progress through elaborating upon their assumptions (See Cobb, 1995: 48–49). This may be understood as being symptomatic of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia, the co-existence of different varieties within a given linguistic or cultural code (See also Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). It may be theorized that the disciplined improvisation of academic identities within MA supervision are heteroglossic, in the way that the voices of the actors interfuse together through a reciprocal give and take, thus informing an intersubjectivity that emerges collaboratively (Sawyer, 2003).

Brown and Edelson define disciplined improvisation as "a dynamic process involving a combination of planning and improvisation" (2001: 4). I argue that this process is an overlooked outcome of MA supervision. Conceiving of postgraduate supervision as an improvisational activity highlights the reciprocal and communicative creativity that derives out of the unique relational dynamics that inform the supervisory encounter. In fact it emerged from the data that the majority of the discussion that occurs within the supervisory dyad is improvisational, because of the unpredictable nature of the responses and actions that come from both participants can easily divert the flow of any given session. In this sense, the MA supervisory encounter can be understood as a collaborative improvisation of what it means to write a disciplined piece of academic work. For example, a basic structure placed upon supervisees by their supervisor is the schedule for the submission of work, but this usually entails a collaborative judgment involving both parties. Another structure related to this phenomenon would be the imposition of a particular academic and discipline specific writing style, which facilitates the production of valued academic knowledge, yet at the same time can be creatively interpreted in response to the research findings.

In MA supervision, both supervisors and supervisees have to attain a balance between the necessary discipline and improvisation needed for the successful performance of academic identity. There are enormous time pressures involved in this type of learning relationship and as a result the supervisor cannot afford to take too many uncalculated risks, as it is the supervisee's academic learning that is being gambled. In fact,

supervisors may always need to have more structures for the actual practice of MA supervision than improvisational performances that may possibly be cultivated during the course of the relationship.

Educational theorists have used a variety of terminologies to describe the structures used in disciplined improvisation: activity formats, scaffolding, interactional routines and pedagogical frameworks (Sawyer, 2003; Seham, 2001). It has been shown that effectivity in supervision is linked to how well supervisors can use and manipulate structure in response to the material and the needs of the supervisees (Manathunga, 2005). This research acts as an interesting counterpoint to the emphasis on structure found within the supervision literature by highlighting the role played by improvisational responses and reactions that occur within the supervisory relationship and how these can enable the development and evolution of academic identity. This counterargument can be best illustrated through the use of a CHAT framework.

6.2 CHAT as a Framework for Understanding MA Supervision

A move away from the primary focus upon effective supervision is needed in order to fully acknowledge how both supervisor and supervisee's conceptualization of the supervisory encounter informs the relational dynamics in MA supervision. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) enables a new, more creative revisioning of postgraduate supervision, by not confining analysis of action to the individual as unit of analysis, but instead defining action as purposeful, object-oriented and related to both social and individual spheres. CHAT sees collective and individual activity as an interdependent entity that is characterized by a compatibility that is simultaneously transformative and supportive (Lupu, 2009).

If we use CHAT as a lens through which MA supervision can be viewed, MA supervision can be seen as an object-oriented activity, where both mediational tools (artifacts) and acting subjects are engaged in a transformative process of development. This in turn structures the interaction by utilizing three core elements: object, subject and artifact. It is the affinities between these core elements and how they engage with cultural and

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historical contexts that enable us to gain a further understanding of MA supervisory relationship.

Using CHAT to illustrate MA supervision, allows us to observe that the learning identity of each member of the dyad both echoes and conditions the learning identity of the Other and the development of the supervisory relationship as a whole. It does this through examining how mediational tools interact with specific learning contexts. The interdependence that characterizes the CHAT approach to MA supervision focuses attention away from the academic object being produced (the thesis) and draws attention to how the relationship process allows the application of mediational tools that enable the production of that academic product.

This perspective corresponds with the concept of supervisory reciprocity, which enables the learning and identity formation to occur in the dyad through the development of trust and relational reciprocity. This advances the notion that learning and identity formation within the MA supervisory dyad is inherently social in nature and in order for it to be purposeful needs to be rooted in and communicated through relationships with others. As I have argued in chapter 5, supervisory reciprocity has certain characteristics that are qualitatively different to other types of reciprocity. As a result, it may be asserted that the role played by supervisory reciprocity within the learning space of academic supervision needs to be appreciated as a key shared relational dynamic that informs the experience of postgraduate education, where both supervisor and supervisee are "interprofessional co-learners" (Rutherford, Walsh, & Rook, 2011).

Two more elements also emerged from the data as epitomizing key relational dynamics within the MA supervisory dyad: academic professionalism and boundary work. These two elements share the common feature of highlighting the amount of ambiguity that is present within MA supervision and more intriguingly still, they revealed that the ambiguity associated with both the relationship and the practice was openly recognized and negotiated on individual and collective levels by both supervisors and supervisees. Professionalism in Higher Education has only just begun to be theorized coherently in the

last decade or so (Menand, 2011). A specific theoretic focus on professionalism within an MA supervisory context has not as yet been cogently developed at this time of writing, but the current literature on professionalism in organizational contexts elaborates key themes that run parallel to my findings. These themes include professional responsibility (Salbrekke & Karseth, 2006), educational utilitarianism (Brint, 2002), and a growing sense of risk consciousness within HE settings (McWilliam, 2004).

MA supervision as boundary work tended to be more pronounced in the supervisee's perspective. Yet, it was found that although psychological boundaries were erected to maintain a separate academic identity distinct from non-academic contexts. These boundaries were open to being broken down, transversed and re-negotiated as the relationship progressed, while simultaneously being used to give a sense of clarity to supervisees' positioning as academic researchers. While the HE literature has for some time linked the idea of a knowledge economy to educational contracts premised on the consumption of knowledge as a product to be packaged and delivered according to the demands of the marketplace (Maher & Tetrecuilt, 2011; Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Gokulsing, 2007), it is still unusual to find research dealing with how the psychological boundaries associated with these educational contracts are formed or negotiated.

Research has documented the various ways in which postgraduate supervision can be organized, planned, assessed and marketed across a wide span of disciplines including: medicine (Brigley & Robbé, 2005), education (Morrison et al., 2011), science (Hasrati & Hashemi, 2011), nursing (Råholm et al, 2010), psychology (Sayette et al, 2011), and the economic, social and administrative sciences (Farley et al, 2010). The act of postgraduate supervision has been refined to specific supervisory strategies that promote the development of a generic skill base that are deemed to be currently marketable to key employment areas (AQF, 2009; Pole, 2000; Deem & Lucas, 2006). Such skills include: cognitive and technical skills, analytic and interpretive skills, critical reflective skills, a capability for abstract thought, discipline specific creativity, and communication skills (AQF, 2009; Kelly, O'Connell & Smyth, 2010).

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However, the rapidly evolving nature of Higher Education and its related employment contexts calls for a renewed focus upon the most essential and fundamental aspect of supervisory practice – the supervisory relationship itself – and how this can enable the development of these skills. Probably the most important finding to come from the data analysis was the supervisory relationship being perceived by both parties as a "shared learning space", which facilitates learning through relational agency. Relational agency can be defined as an ability to coordinate one's thoughts and actions with another persons so as to illustrate problems related to practice, with an aim towards providing solutions and to cooperate with other practitioners so as to collect resources that may be utilized across various systems so as to attain a specific goal or objective (Edwards, 2005).

CHAT as a framework for understanding MA supervision allows for and actively encourages the ambiguities and contradictions associated with real life practices. It also maintains a collaborative perspective on learning relationships that enables a shift away from the master-apprentice model of traditional knowledge transmission and validation towards a recognition of how learning relationships create an educational space where there is a mutual facilitation, negotiation and evaluation of learning (Lupu, 2009). The shared space of MA supervision was found to be paradoxical in nature. The paradox arises out of the fact that although supervision exists in a physical setting, its purpose is the facilitation of a psychoactive space of academic knowledge and identity formation.

Drawing upon the findings that emerged from the data, MA supervision becomes a complex educational relationship that occasions a mutual sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the two parties that constitute the supervisory dyad. This is in turn mediated through a culturally and historically determined object-orientated activity that allows the disciplined improvisation of academic identity for both supervisors and supervisees within the shared relational space of MA supervision.

In the next section of this chapter a theoretical framework based upon CHAT is developed in order to describe this phenomenon. The contents of this section have been structured in such a way so as to elaborate on the previous theoretical analysis and

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frameworks discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) and the findings from the study.

6.2.1 Chatting with CHAT: Re-framing MA Supervision

The analysis of the data focused upon the intersubjective, relational dynamics of both supervisors and supervisees that resulted from their experience of MA supervision. In the light of my previous arguments, I propose a theoretical framework for MA supervision which emphases the relational aspects of the phenomenon and takes into account theories related to: intrasubjective identity development, intersubjective relationships and learning processes, and socio-cultural explanations of postgraduate learning context(s). This delineation and emphasis upon relational dynamics may only serve theoretical and discursive purposes. Yet it should be highlighted that in real world contexts a more adaptable approach may need to be used in order to fully understand the processes at play in MA supervision. For the purposes of theory building and further analysis, I shall adopt a CHAT perspective on MA supervision, thereby attempting to elucidate the transformative theoretical effects that this approach has on the phenomenon under investigation.

Generations of socio-cultural researchers are indebted to the legacy of Lev Vygotsky's work for recognizing that social interactions with other human beings and mediated artifacts act as catalysts for cognition and cultural-historical change. Of relevance to this study is third generation (the presence of multiple activity systems) and fourth generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (the inclusion of emotions and identity) which advances a complex model of social life that forefronts an inter-systemic representation of learning through the adoption of two interacting Activity Systems as the basic mode of analysis (Lee, 2011; Lupu, 2009).

Recognizing emotion and identity formation as part of the dyadic interaction within MA supervision in the Humanities is foregrounded by the use of a CHAT perspective. This perspective facilitates the development of an argumentative positioning that emphases

both the social determination of postgraduate learning activity and the future emotional and identity consequences that result from the interaction, as well as encapsulating the iterative negotiation of ambiguity/clarity dynamic that informs both parties experience. Utilising CHAT, a new model can be developed in order to illustrate the phenomenon of MA supervision. This model is depicted in figure 6.2.
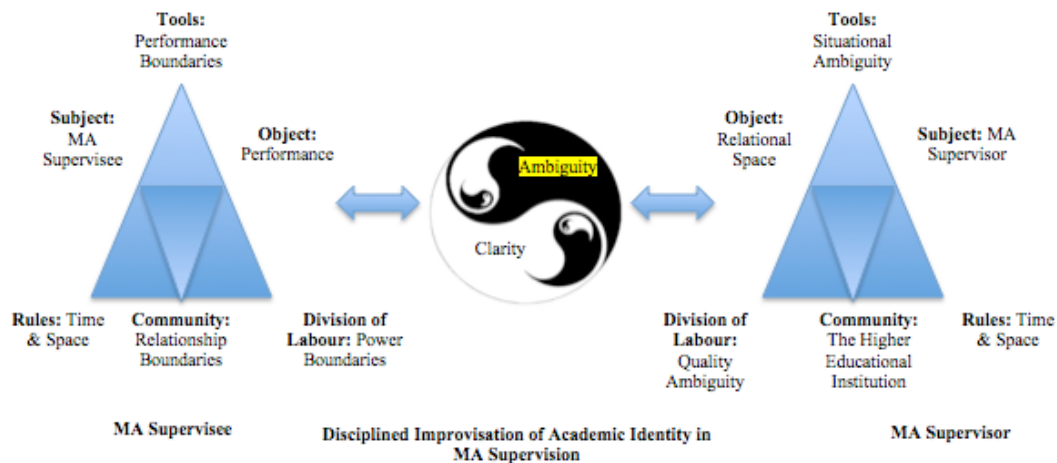
Figure 6.2: A New AT Model to illustrate MA Supervision in the Humanities

This diagram emphases rather than delimits the ambiguities that exist at the heart of MA supervision and focuses attention on to how the disciplined improvisation of academic identity is a key outcome that arises out of the experience of MA research. As you can see in the above diagram, the various elements of AT (subject, object, tools, community, division of labour and rules) are redefined within each participants activity system. The redefinition of these various elements was made possible through the integration of the research findings discussed in the previous chapters. Let us now look at how each activity system has been redefined.

6.2.1.1 The MA Supervisee's Activity System

Table 6.1: Elements within the MA Supervisee's Activity System

Elements within the MA Supervisee's Activity System	
Subject	MA Supervisee
Object	Performance of Academic Identity
Mediating Tools	Performance Boundaries
Rules	Time and Space
Community	Relationship Boundaries
Division of Labour	Power Boundaries

The various elements that compose the MA supervisee's activity system are illustrated in Table 6.1. The Subject of the MA supervisee's activity system is the MA supervisee themselves. As previously shown, the identity of an MA supervisee entails an acting out of the role of academic researcher in the supervisory dyad. This in turn effects the Object of the activity system in that it is the performance of an academic identity within the supervisory dyad, which feeds into the shared outcome of the disciplined improvisation of academic identity. Tools for the supervisee refer to performance boundaries, namely the performance of academic literacy, rhetoric, methodologies and conventions validated and bounded within the course of the MA supervisory experience.

Both the AT elements of Community and Division of Labour also entail an interpretation of boundaries. Community can be understood as stemming from relationship boundaries imposed upon the supervisory relationship itself; the amount of supervisory meetings, the availability of networking opportunities and the relationship of academic work to the supervisee's other AT systems of work, home and social group. Division of Labour refers to power boundaries, which are related to the power enactments that are inherent in the experience of supervision. An example of this can be found in the concept of the supervisory gaze (see Chapter 4). The final element is Rules, which is defined here as time and space. For the MA supervisee, a relatively strict timeline for completion is associated with the completion of the academic work for the MA, and as we have seen a

related aspect of this is that on a psychological level the supervisee tries to limit the amount of emotional investment in the production of academic work and identity in order to afford some protection against said work or identity being rejected.

6.2.1.2 The MA Supervisor's Activity System

Table 6.2: Elements within the MA Supervisor's Activity System

Elements within the MA Supervisor's Activity System	
Subject	MA Supervisor
Object	Relational Space
Mediating Tools	Situational Ambiguity
Rules	Time and Space
Community	The Higher Education Institution
Division of Labour	Quality Ambiguity

The composition of the various elements that make up the MA supervisor's activity system is shown in table 6.2.

The Subject of the MA supervisor's activity system is the MA supervisor themselves. A major part of what defines the identity of an MA Supervisor was found to be academic professionalism. In chapter 4, we learned that academic professionalism is informed by both personal and professional factors and is very much distinct from other definitions of professional practice. For MA supervisors, academic professionalism is a way of negotiating the subjective ambiguity associated with supervisory practice. The Object element is characterised by the the production of a relational space. MA supervisors tend not to be actively involved in the writing of MA research, and therefore see their role in the supervisory relationship as facilitating students in the production of a body of work that meets rigorous academic standards, while simultaneously being cognisant of the fact that contained within the supervisory relationship itself are the seeds for transformation of identity via the cultivation of academic capability.

Tools for the MA supervisor encompass the various strategies used to negotiate the situational ambiguity of supervision, which is related to integrating the supervisee into the research culture. Examples of these strategies include providing supervisees with the relevant resources, materials and networks that enables the completion of their academic work and the embodiment of the identity of scholar. The Community element involves a recognition of a two-fold process where supervisors personify the HE institution as well as being pivotal in the creation of a community of novice scholars within the broader academic context. Division of Labour here, is linked to how supervisors negotiate the quality ambiguity of MA supervision. This is an ambiguity related to what constitutes best supervisory practice. It emerged that supervisors try to negotiate this type of ambiguity through the use of accounting practices. These accounting practices have been previously shown to contain both educational merit and serve a self-protective motive that attempts to shield against any risks that may come from involvement in postgraduate supervision.

Similar the supervisee's activity system, the element of Rules for the MA supervisor are related to time and space, but they are understood differently. Time and space for the MA supervisor has a relevance beyond the time and space dedicated to the actual practice of supervision, instead the supervisory relationship is seen to be part of a greater whole, that in itself is more significant than the production of an academic thesis, in that the experience of supervision may encourage supervisees to re-interpret how they think, behave or act in either practical or theoretical contexts and possibly go on the forge a new identity (academic or otherwise) for themselves.

6.2.1.3 The Shared Outcome: The Disciplined Improvisation of Academic Identity

This diagram posits the disciplined improvisation of academic identity as the shared object behind behind the activity of MA supervision in the Humanities. In positioning this as such, it firmly grounds the objective of MA research as a purpose orientated activity, albeit a purpose that is simultaneously characterised by clarity and ambiguity. It is a cyclical dynamic that is constantly changing and evolving in response to the

interactions between both participants. The centre element can be read as a variation on the traditional Yin Yang symbol. It is premised upon the idea that the academic identities of both supervisor and supervisee are borne out of the synergic energy inherent in the supervisory relationship. There is no supervisor without a supervisee, and there can be no supervisee without a supervisor, meaning that it is the shared space enabled by the supervisory relationship between the two that allows the disciplined improvisation of academic identities.

The role played by the shared outcome of MA supervision is the key differential in my theory of MA supervision. It is my argument that the disciplined improvisation of academic identity is an unrecognized outcome of MA supervision, but that how this identity is formed and internalized is dependent upon the nature and context of the relationship. It should be noted that internalization has been recognized as a "key psychological mechanism" in the interaction of Activity Systems (Engeström, 2001) and was originally defined by Vygotsky (1987) as the internal reconstruction of an external operation. However, I argue that three collective relational dynamics need to be present in MA supervision in order for the disciplined improvisation of academic identity to be actualized. These three relational dynamics are: supervisory reciprocity, the temporal ordering of supervisory space; and micropolitics.

Although the end goal for the two parties may be similar (the production of an academic piece of writing), the ramifications of trying to attain said goal may affect each party differently, especially when it comes to academic identity. The ramifications of this are necessarily ambiguous as they stem from human interactions, but it is how this ambiguity is negotiated that enables each party to clarify their academic identity. The ambiguity associated with the outcome of the supervisory encounter leads us to question the classical distinction between the process and the product in academic work. Although the literature on postgraduate supervision tends to differentiate between the two, my research argues that the process and product of academic work are flip sides of the same coin and should not be rendered distinct from one another. This is evidenced in the collective relational dynamic of supervisory reciprocity where, it emerged from the data, that it is

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important for the supervisor that their contributions to the supervisory relationship be reciprocated back to them in a suitable way by the supervisees. On a deeper level, it may also be recognised that through this relational dynamic, supervisors may be attempting to cultivate trust in the supervisory process and instil a relational agency in their supervisees in a conscious or unconscious effort to repay the benefits bestowed upon them by their own experience of doing research.

The space created by the MA supervisory relationship was found to be temporally ordered. Two qualitatively different types of supervisory time were found to be present in in the data analysis: contractual time and quality time. Contractual time saw the time allocated towards MA supervision as a finite resource. This type of time was subject to strict accounting practices at both an individual and an institutional level, but was also found to overlook the hidden work (correcting, re-writing, giving feedback) that also characterized the supervisory relationship. Quality time, on the other hand, was found to be more salient from a relational point of view. Quality time emerged as a collective relational dynamic that impacted upon both the direction and emotional tenor of the MA partnership. It was characterized as enabling a psychoactive space where problems or issues related to knowledge and academic identity could be openly addressed.

The ambiguities that emerged during this research revealed that micropolitics is a collective relational dynamic within the MA supervisory dyad. This was found to be present not only between the MA supervisor and supervisee, but between different non-academic activity systems outside of academia related to MA supervision. From the research, micropolitics transpired as being used by both parties in the dyad to either strengthen or subvert existing academic identities. The shared outcome of academic identity formation emerged as being fraught with internal and structural ambiguities. For example, MA supervisees place a major emphasis upon the final mark they hope to achieve for their research (a static representational product of academic work), while simultaneously recognizing that the process through which they obtained the grade has a continual use and exchange value in future employment and further educational contexts.

Paraphrasing Engeström (2005), contradictions are the engines of change, possible begetters of learning and development, instead of an incidental aspect of activity.

Learning is an important part of what is fostered in MA supervision. To become expert in the collaborative research activity means to move from actions to activity. In so doing, the actions themselves are objectively and subjectively transformed in that they become part of an emerging academic identity. This does not just apply to the MA supervisees, but also to the supervisor. If the learning that transpires in the MA dyad is understood in this way then learning is not only regulated by past collective experiences with tools and actions (the supervisor's own experience of being supervised or being mentored through the supervisory process), but by the motives that inform the present activity as well.

Yet, before pronouncing definitively a manifest paradox at the heart of postgraduate supervision, any declaration has to be tempered by the acknowledgement that these findings may arise out of problems that are specific to the particular socio-historical context we find ourselves at in Irish Higher Education. In a HE system where how postgraduate study is delivered and consumed is undergoing radical change (Kelly, O'Connell, & Smyth, 2010: McCallin & Nayar, 2012), it is all the more necessary to hone in on the core binary at the heart of MA supervision – the relational dynamics that inform the supervisory relationship. In so doing, genuine ambiguities can be brought to the surface in an effort to more fully understand the phenomenon. The CHAT concept of contradictions allows the researcher to better disclose these ambiguities within the MA dyad, and offers the possibility of using them to our advantage in an alternative politics of hope (McLaren 1989). By using these theoretical concepts—that research on postgraduate supervision has generally overlooked—we can better diagnose and anticipate the extent to which both supervisors and supervisees see themselves as empowered agents that can transform existing educational activity systems and by so doing improve their personal, professional and learning selves.

6.3 Implications For Theory And Practice

6.3.1 Academic Identity as Disciplined Improvisation

As previously argued an overlooked outcome of MA supervision in the Humanities is the disciplined improvisation of academic. By integrating the disciplined improvisation of academic identity into a Cultural-Historical Activity Theory framework for MA supervision, both actors can be understood as creating, performing and facilitating academic identity through their interactions. Understanding MA supervision as a disciplined improvisation captures the dynamism and transformative potential of the relationship where academic activities and ways of being evolve in response to the Other's needs and aspirations, recognizes the improvisational nature of academic identity within postgraduate supervision and forefronts the need for academic structure where this exploration of identity can be played out. Realising that the disciplined improvisation of academic identity is a key outcome of MA supervision underlines the fact that academic identity formation requires a creative exploration of what it means to be a professional, an opportunity to perform this identity and a structured environment that enables and facilitates the performance of said identity.

The disciplined improvisation of academic identity metaphor has at least four implications for the understanding of MA supervision. First, the disciplined improvisational metaphor does not attempt to rationalize the ambiguities that characterize the supervisory encounter instead it sees ambiguity as necessary for the development of academic identity. Each party's interpretation of the ambiguity inherent in the supervisory relationship provides the basis for the social construction of learning to be an academic. The metaphor also emphases the performative aspect of academic identity, where identity is a performance of learning that is scripted through professional engagement, discipline specific writing styles, the use of research based methodologies and its location within a particular institutional space. However without detailed empirical studies on how learning emerges out of the improvised discourse of academic supervision, this theory remains open to discussion. Currently there is a growth in the literature exploring how collaborative discourse informs interaction in Higher

Educational contexts and beyond (Olinger, 2011; Pfister & Oehl, 2009; Mullen, 2010). Recent studies on creativity in Higher Education (Livingston, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2012a; Chen & Chen, 2012b) and postgraduate supervision practices (Bengtsen, 2011) could contribute to this strand of educational research.

Second, within MA supervision, the disciplined improvisation of academic identity is collaborative. I would argue that the MA supervisory relationship is the primary conduit of both parties learning for the entire length of time dedicated to the research project. In order for the best experience of MA research supervision to occur, both supervisors and supervisees need to see themselves as learners, thus framing the process of MA supervision as a project of identity development that is linked to the enhancement of personal and professional capacities. It should be stated that this type of agency does not simply happen through a transitional entitlement (Lupu, 2009), but requires the presence of a collaborative learning environment in order to develop, especially in reference to MA supervision. Becoming more agentic in the supervisory relationship implies recognition of the other parties needs. This can be described as a process of academic identity internalization, an internal construction of identity that involves developing an understanding of how academic knowledge and skills are developed through dialogue and the amount of time investment needed to make the relationship productive and rewarding. However, this cannot occur without a certain degree of investment from both parties. This leads on to the next implication for MA supervision.

Third, the disciplined improvisation of academic identity within MA supervision involves both internal and external processes of identity formation. Not only do both participants need to fully engage with the experience of supervision itself, they also need to acknowledge that the experience has the power to change how they internally perceive their academic selves. It should also be noted that from a CHAT perspective, external manifestations in the academic environment also shape academic identity. This is explicitly found in the manifestation of academic achievement found in graduation ceremonies, forms of networking that are developed by both supervisors and supervisees subsequent to the termination of the supervisory relationship and how particular

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qualifications are valued within given cultural- historical contexts. This said, it is important to realise that despite being subject to perpetual change and evolutions, the core essence of postgraduate supervision still remains the learning relationship.

Fourthly, the disciplined improvisation of academic identity requires contingent conditions of emergence. Engeström (1993: 68) elaborates on the collaborative approach to learning, by relating it to the concept of expertise characterized by a "collective and discursive construction of tasks, solutions, visions, breakdowns and innovations". Tellingly, he argues that expertise develops within and across systems, rather than emerging out of an "individual mastery of specific areas of relatively stable activity" (Engeström, 1966: 168). Dysthe, Samara, & Westrheim (2006) have analysed alternative supervisory models within the framework of the Master of Education programme at the University of Bergen and found that the supervision of MA students is enhanced by multivoiced feedback. Through his investigations of Developmental Work Research (DWR) as illustrative of activity theory, Engeström (1993) highlighted the historicity and multi-voicedness of activity systems. He claims that activity systems are not homogenous entities that automatically adopt best practices without question, but instead they evolve best practice criteria from responding to and appropriating a countless multiplicity of voices, influences and viewpoints. He explains this multiplicity in terms of historical layers. An activity system always contains sediments of earlier historical layers, as well as buds or shoots that may blossom forth into future developments.

These sediments and buds, often defined as historically meaningful differences (Ellis, 2011), are rooted in the different elements that compose the activity system, especially in subjects' mental models of activity. They are also located in the actions and object units of the activity (Engeström, 1993). I argue that these sediments and buds in the context of MA supervision only become actualized through the disciplined improvisation of academic identity that may occur through the supervisory relationship. The major strength that belies the CHAT perspective on MA supervision is its ability to recognize and analyse the points of contact between the psychology of the individual subject and the historically mediated channels that inform the socio-cultural practice of supervision.

Although the CHAT perspective prioritises an analytic focus upon how practices within an activity system evolve and develop in response to cultural and historical changes, its understanding has not yet encompassed how the disciplined improvisation of identities links disparate practices together, as in postgraduate supervisory practice.

6.3.2 The Use of AT-influenced methodology

The uses and effectiveness of Activity Theory (AT) influenced methodologies for social and educational research has recently been garnering much attention (Nussbaumer, 2012). Traditionally, researchers have used AT to study distance education (Kang & Gyorke, 2008), online communities (Baran & Cagiltay, 2010), psychology (Schaffer, Reyes, Kim, & Collins, 2010), classroom district interactions (Anthony, 2012) and doctoral education (Beauchamp, Jazvac-Martek, & McAlpine, 2009). Such a wide application shows that there is a growing cognizance and acceptance of AT methodologies as a means of correlating educational data.

For my research, I adapted the six interdependent elements of AT (object, subject, community, tools, division of labour, rules) for use in supervision logs and interview protocols for both MA supervisors and supervisees. Since each of the participants (supervisor and supervisee), in all three dyads, had their own cultures and histories towards learning that were exhibited in attitudes, values and educational concerns that at best seemed only moderately interlinked, a methodology was needed that captured the innate complexity of the relationship. Such a methodology was found in AT.

The rationale behind this was to capture the processes of macro and micro cultural identity formation as they developed both in the here and now and the historical development of learning that occurred in the supervisory dyad. The here and now of the relationship was captured by administrating AT logs to both parties four times during the course of the academic year 2010-2011 (see appendices 8 and 9). The historical development of the relationship was traced through in-depth semi-structured interviews over the course of the same time period.

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There were both advantages and disadvantages in the use of AT-influenced methodology. One of the major advantages associated with using such a methodology was that it provided a flexible framework for the participants to answer and interpret questions. In so doing it enabled the researcher to focus upon conflicts and ambiguities as sources of information. Drawing upon these, it encouraged this researcher to ask 'provocative questions' (Mertens, 2012) which in turn lead to innovative interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation. But perhaps the greatest advantage of using the AT-influenced methodology was that the research was conducted with the participants rather than on them, thus allowing them to freely express their opinions and thoughts on related issues.

Consideration must also be given to the associated disadvantages of using such a methodology as it did have implications for the actual practice of collecting data. These include: a difficulty in translating the AT terminology into a language that was easily understood by both supervisors and supervisees; the lack of a coherent visual representation that clearly illustrates educational interactions; participants may not like the types of questions asked, as a result all questions and quotes had to be contextualised; and finally the dissemination of the research may prove difficult as AT is still a niche research methodology that is not as yet universally accepted by academic journals.

To date, AT-influenced methodologies have been rarely used to develop an understanding of postgraduate supervision, but with an increasing focus upon constructive and transformative qualitative paradigms, a growing popularity in the academic literature and the burgeoning field of research into Higher Education, it may be predicted that their use will dramatically increase in the next number of years. If AT-influenced methodologies are to be affirmed as valid data collection tools, further education on this type of methodology is needed. Such an education should include the terminology of AT, types of analysis, choosing types of data collection, and attention given to ensure that the research is ethically sound. This methodology offers a new way for researchers to investigate and come to understand educational relationships in HE.

6.3.3 The Contribution to Fourth Generation CHAT

This research makes an important contribution to the evolution of fourth generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). It does so by providing a theoretical framework that incorporates subjective identity and relational elements into the traditional model of Activity Theory interaction as developed by Engeström (1987). In so doing, this study highlights the effect relational dynamics have on the MA relationship itself, as well as marking out the iterative negotiation of ambiguity/clarity, supervisory reciprocity, academic professionalism, boundary work, psychoactive space, the temporal ordering of supervisory space, micropolitics and the disciplined improvisation of academic identity as key factors that that inform such dynamics.

This builds upon Roth's (2007) work, which argued that identity should be accounted for in AT. This research advances his argument by outlining some of the dynamics at play in academic identity formation and showing how they arise out of the interactions between activity systems in MA supervisory practice. It also addresses Annalisa Sannino's (2011) claim that subjectivity is overlooked in the CHAT perspective. She correctly states that the traditional triangular representation of activity omits key issues that were of importance to the founders of AT.

My research builds upon these studies by integrating subjectivity, emotion, boundaries, identity, ethical and moral concerns into a new diagrammatic and theoretical format, which may go some way in addressing these missing elements from previous generations of CHAT. Although I am not suggesting that these are the only, or even dominant, motifs within MA supervisory relationships or educational activity systems in general, this research adds value to this debate by elucidating the relational dynamics present in this type of educational relationship.

6.4 Reflections: My Journey as a Doctoral Researcher

The doctoral experience was very much a holistic learning process. While I had previously done research for my Masters degree, my knowledge of how to construct a working research project was very much limited. On being accepted onto the first UCC Cohort PhD in Education, this changed. It was both through the taught components of the course coupled with support from my fellow students that I learned not alone how to research, but how to become a researcher.

Much of what emerged in the data echoes my own experience of doctoral research, especially the importance of relational dynamics in postgraduate supervision. Perhaps it is more than a little bit ironic that I had two different doctoral supervisors when the topic I was researching was postgraduate supervision. After three years, my original supervisor had to leave the country due to personal reasons. This did come as quite a shock to me as since the beginning of the PhD we had developed quite an amiable working partnership. It was almost like an unravelling of all the themes I had developed from my study.

Yet, there was a silver lining. The change of original supervisor caused me to re-examine my findings. Findings that at first I thought were black and white, on closer examination started to yield shades of grey. I found that I needed to re-evaluate my original analysis and how these could help me to theorise the processes of supervision. Again, the supervisory relationship proved to be of the utmost importance. It was only through the guidance and support of my new supervisor that this re-theorisation of the data became an actuality.

The new doctoral supervisory relationship came into being during the final year of the PhD. Out of this new supervisory relationship new green shoots of analysis and insight began to emerge. This was in no way a straightforward, linear process, as a lot of writing and re-writing, revisions and re-revisions, structuring and re-structuring was involved. Oftentimes, it was felt that one step forward led to two steps backward. However, this process lead to the eventual honing of the academic writing that makes up this thesis, and if you are reading this now, its eventual submission.

I cannot deny that my journey as a doctoral research has irrevocably changed my own identity as researcher. I have lived the disciplined improvisation of academic identity that emerged in the data analysis. This journey has shown me that I can be an academic researcher, that there is a sense of accomplishment on the completion of a research project, and that I would like to become involved in future research projects. This journey has also altered the way that I supervise. It has made me more aware of the internal motivations of supervision, while simultaneously sensitising me to the motivations of supervisees, and how these inform the supervisory encounter. Not only that, but it has reinforced for me the importance of the shared relational dynamics (supervisory reciprocity, the temporal ordering of supervisory space and micropolitics) that also impact upon the supervision process. In some ways I feel that this research has changed the way that I supervise, while in other ways it has caused me to become acutely sensitive to the subtle relational dynamics that shape the supervisory encounter.

I do not see the completion of this PhD thesis to be an end in itself, rather the beginning of my new identity as an academic researcher. I fully intend to make use of the skills learnt through the doctoral experience. I hope to get articles on the relational dynamics of MA supervision published in academic journals, make my findings known through presenting at relevant conferences, and to engage in more research in HE and other contexts using CHAT as a conceptual framework.

The PhD journey was no walk in the park, in fact it was academically intense from the start and expectations were high. These expectations were not part of the hidden curriculum of the Cohort course, but the majority of them came from myself or arose out of how others viewed the process of doctoral work. What emerged most saliently over the four years of study was that, the doctoral path is very much a personal journey. It is very much an individual experience that shapes not alone your own self-identity, but how others view you as well.

6.5 Conclusion

What I have attempted to show in this study is that there are both individual and shared relational dynamics at play in the MA supervisory relationship in the Humanities and that, through the application of a CHAT perspective, a hidden outcome of MA supervision is the disciplined improvisation of academic identity. In contrast to the more linear models that try to describe and explain educational relationships, CHAT allows a structured, but not an overly simplified, heuristic and a collection of broad meta-principles that enables a mapping of transformative learning relationships. CHAT resonates with a progressive stance towards Higher Education, where the examination of ambiguity, contradiction and conflict is encouraged rather than ignored. It forces us to look at phenomena in a holistic manner and its claims are given credence and support from sociocultural theory, and currently its validity and use is being tested across a diversity of organizational and social situations.

I hope and anticipate that this research will in some way sensitize HE researchers, postgraduate supervisors and possibly some curious supervisees towards a deeper understanding of the relational dynamics that underpin the relationship, which is a legitimate prospect if we are serious about promoting new forms of agency and educational change in the HE context. I do not claim that research based on an activity theory methodology supersedes, or even disproves, the findings from other inquiry methods such as ethnography or phenomenology. That would be an indefensible assertion. Rather, I would suggest that a CHAT framework could be put to future use in the development of a practitioner-oriented model of postgraduate supervision that not only emphases lived experience of the supervisory encounter, but also recognizes an important outcome of the supervisory relationship - the disciplined improvisation of academic identity.

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Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

My name is Joe Moynihan. I am a PhD student with the School of Education in University College Cork. My supervisor is Dr. Julia Walsh.

This project aims to investigate how each party in Masters supervision (the supervisor and the supervisee) understand the supervisory process.

I would like to invite you to participate in the piece of research entitled *Covert Conversations: Meaning-making in the Postgraduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship* This project's objective is to provide a better understanding of the MA supervisory relationship, with an aim towards establishing criteria for more effective postgraduate supervision.

In this research project you will be asked to do four interviews in the course of the academic year 2010/2011. Questions will be asked about your experience of MA supervision. These interviews will be digitally sound recorded. A sample of the interactions that occur in the supervisory sessions will also be digitally sound recorded. You will be asked to fill in a brief online survey following your supervision sessions.

All information collected in the interviews, supervision sessions and online surveys will be strictly confidential. All the participants' names will be changed in the course of this piece of research in order to ensure anonymity. All data will be stored for six years.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time during the study in which your participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from you will not be used. If you have any further questions regarding the study, please contact Joe Moynihan on 0872885999, or Dr Julia Walsh on (021) 4904257.

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project please contact:
Dr Paul Conway,
Cohort PhD in Education, School of Education,
University College Cork, Donovan's Road, Cork.
Telephone +353 (0)21 490-2465 Fax +353 (0)21 427-0291 Email paul.conway@ucc.ie

Appendix 2: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
For the PhD Dissertation
entitled
Covert Conversations: Meaning-making in the Postgraduate Supervisor-Supervisee
Relationship
I, _____ of

_____

Hereby consent
To be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken
BY _____Joe Moynihan_____

I understand that the purpose of the research is to ask MA supervisors and supervisees
what they think about the process of supervision

I acknowledge
1) That the reasons for the research, how it will happen, what I will have to do and things
that might go wrong for me if I choose to be in the research have been explained to me.

2) That I am choosing to be in this research and no-one is making me do so.

3) I understand that when the results are put together they will be used for research and
may be put into magazines for other people to read.

4) The things that I have said, individually, will not be given to any person unless I say
this can be done.

5) I can choose to stop being in this research project at any time. If I do this, I won't be in
this anymore and what I have said will not be used in the project.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Interview Guide 1 (MA Supervisor)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opener

Please, could you describe for me your **background** in supervision?

How did you become a supervisor?

SUBJECT

Where did you learn **how to supervise**? (reproductive/reflective process)

What do you feel **motivates** a supervisor?
- What about the supervisee?

What **attributes** does a good supervisor have?
- Does this include **ambition** for self/students?

OBJECT

What, in your opinion, constitutes **successful supervision**?

What difference do you make in the person reaching their **potential**?

What are some of the **issues or challenges** that effect supervision?

MEDIATING TOOLS (resources, concepts, materials)

How is **knowledge constructed** in supervision?

What mediating tools (resources, concepts, materials) are benefitial to supervisors/supervisees?

RULES (explicit/implicit)

How is **respect** shown in supervision?

How do you **feel** when a student **disputes your advice** or suggestions?
- What do you tend **to do** in this situation?

COMMUNITY

What type of **relationship** is there between superviser & supervisee?
- Is this affected by any **outside factors**?

Is Supervision connected in any way to your **career path?**

DIVISION OF LABOUR (who does what)

With whom does the **responsibility** ultimately lie when it comes to supervision?

Do you ever feel **frustated** at any aspect of supervision?

END

Could you supply me with a **metaphor/or a drawing** that best describes supervision?

Appendix 4: Interview Guide 2 (MA Supervisor)

SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW (2) – After initial meeting with supervisee
Opener:
1) What do you do in your first supervisory meeting with an MA student?

SUBJECT
2) Do you feel that you can empathise with where a student is coming from when they start off on a postgraduate course?
- Advice giving
3) What expectations do you have for the student?

OBJECT
4)) Do you feel that you need to know background information about a student before you can work properly with them?

5) At this stage, would you be aware of any trends or issues that may arise?

MEDIATING TOOLS
6) How do you settle on the choice of topic?
- strategies

7) Is trust important in these initial stages? How is it manifested?
- actions or is it just implied?

RULES
8) Is there a set structure to these early meetings?
-Do students act in a similar manner?

9) Who guided the conversation in the initial meeting? Why?

10) Do you lay down some ground rules during the initial stages of supervision?
- imp of written work
11) How often do you have meetings with your students?

COMMUNITY
12) How are supervisors allocated supervisees in this department?
- elem of choice
- difficulties in staffing
13) Is there a balance between teaching activities and supervisory activities?

DIVISION OF LABOUR
14) How will you support the student through their studies?
15) At this stage in the supervisory relationship, what would you describe yourself as:
Host/guide; teacher; coach; sponsor; role model; prootector; counsellor; friend; colleague.

Appendix 5: Interview Guide 3 (MA Supervisor)
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for MA Supervisors (INTERVIEW 3)

1. How would you describe a professional supervision style?
2. Has there been a deskilling/upskilling of supervisory practice in recent years?
- role of Preparatioon for Research -Emphasis on presentations and powerpoint
- Teaching and learning unit
3. Has it ever been the case that you have **instantly 'clicked'** with a supervisee and known immediately that you will work well together? Pls give an example of this.

4. You mentioned previously that there was an element of **give and take** in supervision. Could you explain this to me.

5. How do students **show that they value** the work you've done together? Gifts/cards/ life lessons – Does this have meaning for you?

6. You mentioned in a previous interview that the MA is "just jumping through another hoop" – in your opinion, **what do students learn** from the MA experience?

7. The MA has recently been described as a **modern rite of passage**, are there any **rituals** attached to it? – first meeting with supervisor/handing up/ graduation

8. With the advent of the "structured MA" and the increasing emphasis **on learning outcomes**, is there a danger that a certain amount **of uniformity** may creep into the MA degree?
9. Since the actual writing of the MA dissertation is primarily a **solitary enterprise**, do you think that this may in some way promote a **culture of individualism** within the university? (Ivory Tower)
10. What role **does 'Time" and 'time management'** play in MA supervision?
    - SS's own time management
    - How do Supervisors manage time?
    - Is supervisors time valued at an organisational level? What message does this send out?
    - What causes some supervisors to freely give of their time to SS, whereas others tend to erect strict time boundaries and distance themselves from SS?
    - Does it matter how much time you spend with a SS? What defines quality time?
    - Do you find that supervision colonises a supervisor's free time? What are the effects of this?

11. 11. What will academic supervision be like **in 10 years time**? Commercialisation/decline in academic freedom/ monitoring of output/ supervision training/ the attack on tenure/ Online degrees

Appendix 6: Interview Guide 4 (MA Supervisor)
ROUND 4 – SUPERVISOR INTERVIEWS (FINAL)

SUBJECT
How was your experience of MA supervision last year?
- role of boundaries

What do you find most satisfying about the job of supervision?

Is the relationship between supervisor and supervisee the most important factor in MA supervision?
-caring dimension
- demands of caring

Would empathy play a role in MA supervision?

Is caring for students encouraged by the college at large?

Does caring for students ever become routinized out of nescessity?

Does the emotion of guilt ever make itself felt during or after supervision? (Hargreaves?)

Is there a gendered dimension? Feminine caring ethic Vs Classical male professionalism – is this linked to the idea of professional distance/boundaries?

OBJECT
What characteristics make up the ideal supervisor?
-status
-organisation

Does it matter who one's supervisor is? Why?

Could the act of "doing an MA" be described as a performance? Performance of an academic identity? Does it affect the way students think about themselves?

MEDIATING TOOLS
What would you expect a supervisor the feel when they are supervising?

RULES
What would characterise the culture of supervision in UCC?
-concern for ss
- sympathy
- dedication –ethical responsibility – conscientiousness – althruism

How much autonomy would a supervisor have in supervision? Should there be more or less?

COMMUNITY
In relation to supervision, are there informal things that you do voluntarily that you are not required to do?

What else do you do beyond what is required?
What motivates you to do this?

In your department, is it expected/encouraged that a supervisor should go beyond their formal role obligations?

How can UCC/HEA make supervisors do more than required?
-courses – techniques – culture – training

DIVISION OF LABOUR
Is MA supervision essentially managerial or democratic or a mixture of the two? In what way?

Are there rules governing the display of emotion in MA supervision? (anger?)

How was the MA supervision relationship ended?

FINISH

Appendix 7: Interview Guide 1 (MA Supervisee)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for MA Supervisee

Please, could you tell me how you came to do a Masters?

What has your experience of supervision been so far?

Who do you feel dictates the topics under discussion in the supervision time?

What do you feel **motivates** a supervisee to become fully involved in the research process?
- What about the supervisor?

What **attributes** does a good supervisee have?
- is there a correlation between having a good supervisor and being a good supervisee?
What, in your opinion, constitutes **successful supervision**?

What factors may effect a supervisee reaching their **potential**?

What are some of the **issues or challenges** that effect supervision from a supervisee's perspective?

How is **knowledge constructed** in supervision?

What mediating tools (resources, concepts, materials) are benefitial to supervisors/supervisees?

How is **respect** shown in supervision?

How do you **feel** if a supervisor does not negotiate with you and explicitly dictates the direction of your research?
- What do you tend **to do** in this situation?

What type of **relationship** is there between superviser & supervisee?
- Is this affected by any **outside factors**?

Is the Masters degree connected in any way to your **career path?**

With whom does the **responsibility** ultimately lie when it comes to supervision?

Do you ever feel **frustated** at any aspect of supervision?

END
Could you supply me with a **metaphor/or a drawing** that best describes supervision?

Appendix 8: MA Supervision Student Log

MA Supervision Student Log: Your Experience of MA Supervision

Thank you for taking part in this short survey. All information collected is strictly confidential

I appreciate your time and thank you.

1. Name:
_____

2. Your Supervisor's Name:
_____

3. Approximately, how many hours did you spend on academic activities that are related to the completion of your Masters degree per week?
_____

4. These activities include (Mark the appropriate box/boxes):
   o reading
   o writing
   o meeting with my supervisor
   o discussion with colleagues
   o Other (please specify)

_____
_____
_____

5. This week I also (Choose the appropriate term):
   o worked full-time
   o worked part-time
   o worked as an academic tutor/mentor
   o worked in a professional capacity unrelated to academic work
   o worked for a volunteer organisation
   o attended lectures/presentations/workshops
   o acted as a caregiver (children, parents, spouse, etc.)
   o socialised with family or friends
   o Other (please specify)

_____
_____
_____

6. Since your last supervision meeting, which of the terms below best describes the progress of your MA?
   o made good progress
   o made progress
   o made no progress

o had difficulties
o went back to square one

Any further comments

_____
_____
_____

7. Since I last met with my supervisor, the individuals who contributed (positively or negatively) to my MA progress were: (Choose as many as are applicable)
- o friends/ family
- o other MA students
- o my supervisor(s)
- o other lecturers
- o library staff
- o the student's union
- o work colleagues
- o Other (please specify)

_____
_____
_____

Please give a reason as to why they effected your progress
_____

_____

8. Did you experience any difficulties since your last supervision session?
- o writer's block
- o funding
- o an intellectual dead-end
- o lack of space/time
- o difficulties in getting academic resources
- o lack of contact with supervisor
- o other (Please specify)

_____
_____

What did you do to try and overcome these difficulties?
_____

9. Do you feel comfortable asking for help from your supervisor?

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o Yes
o No

What do you think are the reasons behind this?

_____

10. Any further comments (suggestions or comments, questions that should have been asked, lack of clarity on any questions, the amount of time taken to complete this log, etc.)
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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SurveyMonkey
"Surveys Made Simple."

Appendix 9: MA Supervision Supervisor Log

MA Supervision Supervisor Log: Your Experience of MA Supervision

Thank you for taking part in this short survey. All information collected is strictly confidential

I appreciate your time and thank you.
1. Name:
_____

2. Your Supervisee's Name:
_____

3. Approximately, how many hours did you spend on academic activities that are related to Masters supervision per week?
_____

4. These activities include (Mark the appropriate box/boxes):
- o reading
- o correcting
- o meeting with supervisees
- o discussion with colleagues

Other (please specify)
_____

_____

5. This week I also (Choose the appropriate term):
- o worked full-time
- o worked part-time
- o worked as an academic tutor/mentor
- o worked in a professional capacity unrelated to academic work
- o worked for a volunteer organisation
- o gave lectures/presentations/workshops
- o acted as a caregiver (children, parents, spouse, etc.)
- o socialised with family or friends

Other (please specify)
_____

_____

_____

6. Since your last supervision meeting, which of the terms below best describes the progress of your MA student?
- o made good progress
- o made progress
- o made no progress
- o had difficulties
- o went back to square one

Please elaborate

_____

_____

_____

7. Since I last met with my supervisee, the individuals or groups who contributed (positively or negatively) to the way I supervise were: (Choose as many as are applicable)
- o friends/ family
- o other MA students
- o my supervisor(s)
- o other lecturers
- o library staff
- o the student's union
- o work colleagues
- o the university
- o nobody

Other (please specify)

_____

_____

Please give a reason as to why they effected your progress

_____

_____

_____

8. Did your supervisee experience any difficulties since your last supervision session?
- o writer's block
- o funding
- o an intellectual dead-end
- o lack of space/time
- o difficulties in getting academic resources
- o missing supervision meetings

other (Please specify)

_____

_____

What did you do to try and overcome these difficulties?

_____

_____

_____

9. In your opinion, how do you feel the supervisory relationship is progressing?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. Any further comments (suggestions or comments, questions that should have been asked, lack of clarity on any questions, the amount of time taken to complete this log, etc.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Survey Powered by:
SurveyMonkey
"Surveys Made Simple."

Appendix 10: RESEARCH STUDY DEMOGRAPHICS COLLECTION FORM FOR MA SUPERVISORS

Covert Conversations: Meaning-making in the Postgraduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship
By
Joseph Moynihan.

RESEARCH STUDY DEMOGRAPHICS COLLECTION FORM FOR MA SUPERVISORS
(Please Type/Print)

Name:_____Desired Pseudonym:_____

Age Bracket:
☐ 20 – 30   ☐ 31-40   ☐ 41-50   ☐ 51-60   ☐ 60+

Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Postal Address:
_____
_____
_____
_____

Academic Qualifications:
_____
_____
_____
_____

How many years have you worked in academia? _____

Current Occupation: _____

What courses do you supervise on?
_____
_____
_____
_____

How many people have you mentored in a research capacity?_____

Appendix 11: RESEARCH STUDY DEMOGRAPHICS COLLECTION FORM FOR MA SUPERVISEES

Covert Conversations: Meaning-making in the Postgraduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship
 By
Joseph Moynihan.

RESEARCH STUDY DEMOGRAPHICS COLLECTION FORM FOR MA SUPERVISEES
(Please Type/Print)

Name:_____Desired Pseudonym:_____

Age Bracket: □ 20 – 30   □ 31-40   □ 41-50   □ 51-60   □ 60+

Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Postal Address:
_____
_____
_____
_____

Academic Qualifications:
_____
_____
_____
_____

How many years have you been in academia? _____

Current Occupation: _____

What is the name of the current MA are you doing?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 12 Reflective Journal Template on MA Supervisor's Data

Pre – Interview Reflective Journal

1) Schedule of the Interview

2) What questions are most important? Do you need to ask follow-up questions based on the AT Logs?

3) How are you feeling about this interview?

Post Interview Reflective Journal

The daily schedule and logistics of the study

Reflective Diary
- What stood out?
- How is this leading me to question my own values and interests in relation to MA supervision
- What have I learned here?

Methodological log: decisions and associated rationales for next interview session

What theoretical links can you make from the data?

How does this interview serve to frame the MA supervisor's perspective on the MA supervisory relationship?

What relational dynamics were touched upon?

Appendix 13 Reflective Journal Template on MA Supervisee's Data

Pre – Interview Reflective Journal

1) Schedule of the Interview

2) What questions are most important? Do you need to ask follow-up questions based on the AT Logs?

3) How are you feeling about this interview?

Post Interview Reflective Journal

 Schedule and logistics of the study

Reflective Diary
- What stood out?
- How is this leading me to question my own values and interests in relation to MA supervision
- What have I learned here?

Methodological log: decisions and associated rationales for next interview session

What theoretical links can you make from the data?

How does this interview serve to frame the MA supervisee's perspective on the MA supervisory relationship?

What relational dynamics were touched upon?