A Study of Women

Who Are Headteachers And Mothers

By

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses upon the experience of identity through gathering and studying accounts of the personal and professional lives of twenty women who are headteachers and mothers in the North Midlands of England. The enquiry is shaped by a conceptual framework which grows out of an in depth review of the UK and international literature. The interplay between agency and structure within the social construction of a gendered identity, and the value systems based upon this lead to a consideration of the history of headship and its reworking as leadership. A consideration of research methodology explains the choice of survey using a qualitative approach, based upon a semi-structured interview method. Presentation and analysis of the fieldwork has an emphasis on ensuring that the subjects' voices are prioritised. The complex dialogic nature of identity is clearly heard and the women demonstrate their struggle for agency through these identities.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Study

This study seeks to explore the experience of women who are mothers and primary school headteachers. I take an ethnographic approach to the working lives of twenty women who are mothers and headteachers in primary schools across two local authorities in the North Midlands of England, in which I present and analyse the issues around the interplay between agency and structure in the formation and development of professional and personal identities. By agency and structure I mean the extent to which the woman as headteacher and as mother is able to control and shape her identity or the way in which it is shaped by external structures such as cultural expectations. I also investigate the interplay between professional and personal identities.

In undertaking this study I intend drawing on a range of intellectual resources: first, by using work from the literature on identity I produce a conceptual framework of identity and its relationship with agency and structure; second, I develop this framework by using work charting the historical development of the understanding of headship, in order to investigate theories and models of headship and its interplay with leadership and management; third, I investigate research into the gender perspective of headship and the personal identity woven into working lives, particularly of women and mothers in order to complete the conceptual framework. This is followed by my own field work. In designing and carrying out the research

this work has been informed by an approach to knowledge based on a subjective epistemology in which I place myself as a woman, mother and headteacher into the project, and I draw on the feminist tradition to support this.

The particular research questions upon which the enquiry is based are:

- how is the identity of a woman experienced and understood?

- how is the identity of a headteacher experienced and understood?

- how is the identity of a mother experienced and understood?

- What is the nature of the interplay between these identities?

- how do leadership and management impact upon professional and personal identity and vice versa?

- in what ways have these issues been researched and does this research influence policy, practice or prevailing attitudes?

Investigating these questions is based on the argument that few studies of headship have sought to understand the impact of the complex inter-relationship of personal and professional life upon headship. The study also presents a view that the competing demands of the roles of mother and headteacher provide an opportunity to investigate this impact with a particular focus upon gender. This investigation reflects the complex interplay of identity, agency, and structure in headship. It also tracks the way in which the current debate in education seeks rather to establish a relationship between headship and leadership, and the way in which methodology influences what is considered to be knowledge within the debate.

This introductory chapter will be concerned to show the origins and rationale of these issues before providing an overview of the structure of the dissertation.

1.2 Problematising Identities

There is presently much exploration of identity, which will be summarised in Chapter Two. There is also much literature in the area of gender and headship which will be summarised in Chapter Four. What is missing is literature specifically focusing upon the experience of women who are headteachers and mothers. There are some incidental accounts in work that explores women as headteachers or the personal lives of headteachers, but the particular focus is missing from the literature.

In order to investigate specifically the interaction of identity upon the role of a woman who is a headteacher and mother there needs to be an understanding that all of this activity takes place within structures and that agency is limited or shaped by these structures. Within my present experience I am led to ask "How are we defined: with reference to whom or what?"

In terms of this need for definition and reference it is noticeable that when we meet someone we need a name, a location; we ask questions about occupation, family, and where it is that we live. We need a framework or structure within which to locate our new acquaintance. People are often introduced as someone's son, daughter, mother, cousin, etc. Perhaps, traditionally, more often a woman is introduced as someone's wife. Our identity is defined with reference to others and, in many cases, a woman is identified by her relationship to a man (de Beauvoir, 1953). This suggests a

relationship between identity (summed up by all those items above) and the way in which we are treated, or expect to be treated, by others.

In terms of ethnographic study the detail of the paragraph above constitutes a discussion about agency and structure, and the interplay between them, and the voices that are heard in society. Questions around to what extent I am an agent of my own development, and to what extent I am determined by the structure imposed by others in society are important in this discussion. Am I the agent who creates the structure and has a voice that is heard, or do I allow others to hold the power over me and create the structure to which I respond or even simply operate within?

In searching the literature, I have found various approaches to this question. In Blackmore (1999), Bourdieu (2001), Hall (1996), Hill et al (1995), Kimmel (2000), for example, a case is made that for most of history most women have been part of the latter scenario with Man as the agent creating our reality, our structure, and defining who and what we are. It must be acknowledged that there are many women in history who have defied the structure (rather than changed it), operated as agents and made their voices heard. We might consider women like Boudica, Elizabeth 1, Florence Nightingale, Margaret Thatcher, etc., and yet many of their qualities are those associated with males or masculinity. They may have been admired, obeyed or hated by others (whether male or female) but they still operated within a male dominated society and they did little to change this. They took on a masculine persona and adopted the male voice. As such they cannot be said to have broken the mould, but rather to have developed outside it - the mould still exists. To break the mould and ensure that women's voices are heard without this masculine stance is to bring a

fundamental change in the way in which society operates and those researchers within the feminist tradition, which has influenced this study, are seeking such change. In Chapter Two I present some brief notes on masculinities which help inform the debate on identity. In Chapters Four and Five I investigate what has been done to challenge the position of women in relation to male domination through feminist research with the work of, for example, Blackmore (1999), Coleman (2001, 2002), Gunter (2001), Hall (1996), and Talburt (2000).

This study is clearly focusing upon gender and professional identities within the leadership debate, and draws upon research representing various traditions. Because the focus is the development of identity within education the work of Grace (1995) and Gunter (1997, 1999, 2001), tracing the historical development of headship, provides an important context against which the implications for identity in women headteachers (in e.g. Blackmore 1993, 1999, Hall 1996, Coleman 2001, 2002) can be investigated. Hall and Southworth (1997) highlight that most research in the area of headship to that point had been conducted by men without any reference to identity, and Gunter and Ribbins (2003) bring further depth to the debate about educational leadership and also to the methodology chosen for my own fieldwork. Bourdieu (2001), Branaman (2001), David (1986), Gunter (1999, 2001), Holland and Lave (2001), Oakley (1972, 1981), and Talburt (2000) are examples of those researchers used to explore issues around agency and structure within gendered identity.

Identity is a site of conflicting and compatible identities, in terms of the link between the role and the activity within the identity. This encompasses the professional or working life; the parental role; and personal identity. This is more complex here

because in this study there is a specific focus upon women. In Chapter Two I explore wider issues around womanhood and the reasons for omitting other structuring contexts like race or class. In terms of definition of 'woman' I present David's (1986) understanding of the interplay between biological sex and the structuring context of gender. The investigation in this study is into women in particular circumstances (combining specific roles or identities) but it is important to explore the fundamental issues around our understanding of womanhood with its inherent stereo-types, underpinning the way in which roles are played out, and interplay. For the purposes of the study identity will be defined in two main ways - personal identity and professional identity, raising questions about where the parent identity fits in; but it is underpinned by an understanding of the interplay between agency and structure, and the way in which this relates to gender. Further to this, from a concept of dual identities the study tracks a development of the understanding of Holland and Lave's (2001) interpretation of Holquist's (1990) "dialogism" (p.9) where the individual identities compete for attention.

In defining the way in which the term 'gender' is used in the study it is important to note that the concern is with the social context and understanding of what it means to be a woman. Here male and female relate to biological definitions while masculine and feminine relate to gender with all the psychological and sociological frameworks and expectations within which they operate. In Chapter Two there is an exploration of Bourdieu's (2001) argument that traditional views of sex (with an emphasis upon the sexual act) contribute to the development of gendered issues around identity.

In Chapters Two and Four I investigate the nature of the structures within which the agency of the woman who is headteacher and mother develops. This includes an investigation of those traditional views of the role of women and mothers, and the impact of these upon the understanding of female headship. Bourdieu's (2001) development of his understanding of male domination rooted in sexual intercourse is used to explain these traditional views and expectations.

1.3 Origins and Rationale of the Study

My Story: Self as a Case of the Problematic

One of the concerns that pre-occupies me as a headteacher at present is the national attitude to addressing the under-achievement of boys. I am very happy to address under-achievement wherever it may be found, but I have great concerns that measures taken should not simply disadvantage girls. It is interesting too, as Deem (1984) points out, that it has taken the whole of history for society to acknowledge that females are disadvantaged in terms of opportunities throughout their lives, but only a few years to identify that boys' achievement in school is of concern.

My upbringing did not prepare me for a gendered experience of the world. I was an individual defined by my own intelligence, talents and personality and was raised to believe that I could achieve anything I wanted to. I had no idea, as I was growing up, of any gender perspective or issues around identity. My mother worked and had equal say in matters to my father. Indeed as the one with the higher income she was given the position of having the final say in many decisions.

My Dad, who had grown up in very poor circumstances, had suffered a serious head injury as a teenager which resulted in many serious illnesses. His determination to work in heavy, manual jobs beyond his health capacity resulted in many further accidents and injuries. His early surgery, which had demanded courage and determination to survive, had robbed him of his confidence to find a job which would have suited his intelligence, and led him to confront and challenge his physical capacities.

My Mum had come from a poor Welsh mining village where family life, the Church and education dominated the value system. There were few educational opportunities but after losing her father she determined to train as a nurse. At 17, with little experience of the world, she left the valleys to take up nursing training in Bath - very much against the structured expectation of the day. She survived on a minimal income but with various moves around the Midlands she was determined to strive for ever greater achievements. She met my Dad in hospital and a beautiful love story began.

From the time I was born they were determined that I should have every opportunity to achieve in life. They decided that I would be a clever child and I obliged by working hard at school. My Dad would not tolerate any suggestion that I was less than the genius he believed me to be and when I was not given a place at Grammar school on passing my 11 plus, he was devastated. I had to prove that his confidence was well founded and worked ever harder. I then had to satisfy myself - which has been much harder. This work towards a doctorate is part of that same quest.

Academic achievement seems to be of greater value in this structure than reaching the top of my profession.

And so I find myself at forty eight years old, a mother, a headteacher, a farmer's wife, a Methodist Lay Preacher, and a classically trained singer (the order in this list relates to the discussion in Chapter Three), juggling all the things that matter in my life and trying to give each of them 1000%. This is perhaps the only way in which the gender issue was noticeable early on. Everyone told me that the combination of roles and activities was impossible to cope with and yet I felt that this would not have been so if I had been a man.

Whether I acted as agent in developing my own identity is subject to question. Perhaps I simply responded to the expectations of those around me, and it was these expectations which defied the structures of the time. Perhaps these dilemmas have shaped my readiness to explore the issues around gender and headship - to challenge the meta-narratives regarding masculine supremacy established over many centuries. The study also seeks to find whether while these have overtly largely disappeared, their legacy lingers in the experience of everyday life.

1.4 Problematising the Self

As the basis of qualitative research suggests, individual experience is at the core of world experience and world change, and this where my study is focused. This study represents a shift in my own thinking about headship when analysed in terms of identity. My life story is not unusual but it is worth exploring because it highlights issues which, along with headship, leadership and gender, are issues which are

pertinent across the profession. My experience fits into this pattern because I am a woman who is a headteacher and a mother who, in the light of present reading, questions her own agency. I am a woman, in my second headship in a city primary school, and a mother of two children who have grown up while I have been a headteacher. My work is located within the research into identity because it examines headship and the way in which gender impacts upon this, but goes further to look at the impact of motherhood in this experience and what this reveals about identity, agency and structure. It is necessary because so far no work has focused specifically on the impact upon headship of being both a woman and a mother, though Coleman (2001 and 2002), Hall (1996), and Pascal and Ribbins (1998) [1] had women in their samples who met these criteria.

The context in which headteachers are working is one of Government intervention and control set against the agenda of local management of schools with an accountability profile of an assessed National Curriculum, League Tables, OFSTED Inspections, and performance management. From my reading I realise that so far I have mainly responded to those structures in place around me, even though I believed that I was very much the agent. It was only after twelve years in my first headship and embarking upon my second that I really began to re-shape the structure; and yet this, too, was within the wider structure of expectations defined in Government policy and LEA guidelines. It is also important to say that I was only able to have any such influence because the LEA is enlightened and empowering, and because the Chair of Governors at the school showed a respect for my opinion and abilities which appeared to transcend gender or any other preconceptions. In the terms of this study, however, I have to question the ability of anyone in the role of headteacher to be fully an agent.

Throughout my career I have been determined to assert myself as female and to ensure that within my organisation we confront gender issues in order to ensure that all are valued and all voices are heard. It is probably the case that my version of asserting myself as female, for many years, meant being better at the male game than the men were - or not letting my 'femaleness' show in order to be accepted as credible in the job. It is only in more recent years and, perhaps, with the confidence of being appointed to a second headship that I have sought to be really female in the way in which I have presented headship; and I have to accept that this presents many risks which will be explored later in the study. Reading and discussing Valerie Hall's *Dancing on the Ceiling* (1996) led me to think about the way in which I had accepted being an honorary man within the men's club, tolerated as long as I did not challenge the masculine way of doing things. Work on career pathways, in the Ed.D course, in which we interviewed senior managers about the management of change, highlighted issues about agency and structure (Bradbury 1999), and the research modules helped to give definition to my epistemological stance (Bradbury 1999). The investigation grows out of this opportunity to study and reflect upon such issues and the impact they have upon how education is experienced both by those who deliver it and by those who receive it.

1.5 Problematising Contexts: Rationale

In order to investigate these issues Chapter Two explores the conceptual framework of identity with particular emphasis upon the impact of agency and structure. Chapter Three investigates the way in which the understanding of the role of headteacher has undergone many changes in history within a social context and continues to develop

to one of leader with all the responsibility of the post but little power in terms of agency.

This next section is a very brief summary of development and change in the way in which education has been organised and managed during the twentieth century which has direct bearing upon the context of education at the beginning of the twenty first century and is the background to headship.

1.5i Twentieth Century Change and the Implications for Headship in the Twenty First Century

Flude and Hammer (1993) show the way in which education has developed in a manner which is dependent upon societal influences. The education system in England and Wales was based upon the Education Act of 1944 and in turn upon the Balfour Act of 1902 and these had a focus upon the need for equality. Meredith (1992) argues that these, however, did not "provi(de) secure foundation(s) for legally enforceable rights on the part of parents or children to schooling" (p.13). They were "couched in extremely vague phraseology" with lots of "escape clauses" (p.46-7).

Flude and Hammer (1993) describe how in 1976 the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in his Ruskin College Speech, launched an attack on the low standards achieved in British education and the failure of schools to link education to the needs of the labour market. Callaghan was part of the Hillgate Group which campaigned for education to match the needs of the economy. Flude and Hammer (1993) trace the way in which these issues were taken up by the Conservative Government from 1979 with a focus upon choice and accountability.

They trace how the 1988 Education Reform Act established local management of schools, a National Curriculum and assessment framework, a new focus upon the integration of special needs, and control of curriculum change through staff inset (the famous 'Baker Days'). In addition there was a changed emphasis upon the relationship between parents, schools, LEAs and the Government and a strengthening of the power of Governing Bodies. The position of headteachers, and particularly headteachers who are women, within this development is extremely complex and will be the focus of Chapters Three and Four.

In examining literature about the changes at this time it is clear that the Government was taking control of education by selling a promise to give parents greater influence in what happened in schools. Flude and Hammer (1993), however, argue that in these changes concerns about equality were replaced with issues of "parental choice and competition", "and the management of resources" was replaced with a "battery of central controls" and a "strong regulatory framework" (p.vii). The Government held teachers responsible for everything that was wrong with primary education and took the opportunity to take control and to move to a technical agenda where headship could be manipulated to serve the political agenda.

Further, contrary to the way in which the Act was sold to the public, Meredith (1992) argues that open enrolment had an important link with school budgets but was really only open for a "minority of strong-willed, articulate, middle class parents with the time, inclination and knowledge of the system" (p.49). Flude and Hammer (1993) argue that the "real seizure of power is not by central from local government, but

centrally by politicians from professionals" (p.225). Bach and Coulby (1989) echo this move from partnership to central control but add that it served to erode confidence in teachers and LEAs. They also highlight contradictions of the Act in that the public perception of "local autonomy" hid the reality of "tight central control" (p.115) They present a view that in the Act "ideologically the primacy of the market has now been firmly established" and that "the prevailing ideology is to accept the view that social stability depends upon the individual pursuit of economic gain" (p.122). This moves power from the "producer" (teachers) to the "consumers" (parents). This background is important because following chapters will explore literature which suggests that the gender of the headteacher in such a policy change is an important area of investigation.

In Chapter Three I trace a strong argument that education is about social control and that the position of the headteacher at the various stages of history reflects this. In this present very brief description of the changes and development in education during the twentieth century it is clear that this is a dominant theme. Thus issues of headteacher identity, with the interplay of agency and structure, needs to be seen in this context.

1.6 Summary and Structure of the Study

The aim of my research, as stated, is to investigate the experience of women who are mothers and headteachers using a perspective and methodology which will ensure that those located in this position have a voice which is heard. Chapter Two begins to establish the conceptual framework of the study which concerns how we understand identity. Chapter Three takes this forward in a literature review about headship and

its relationship with leadership and management. This explores the way in which identity is constructed in relation to headship and also investigates the way in which the research methods and methodology influence what is considered to be knowledge. Chapter Four extends the literature review to investigate what is known about women as headteachers. Chapter Five explores the ontology and epistemology which determines the methodology and methods to be used in the fieldwork. Chapter Six presents the results of the fieldwork interviews with women who are headteachers and mothers. Chapter Seven presents an analysis of data, and Chapter Eight summarises the conclusions drawn and presents an agenda for further research.

My position within the research will be explored along with my underlying assumptions and how all of this illuminates issues around identity. While the interviews will be open discussions or conversations which are bound to be subjective in nature, there will be an attempt to explore particular areas of headship, gender and motherhood in order to answer the questions that shape my enquiry. There will be an attempt to theorize, from my findings and this will be compared or contrasted with the theories in the literature.

This study is an exploration of experience within a particular identity (or set of identities), beginning from the position that each identity brought to a role has a valuable contribution to make to the way in which it is acted out. It does not deal with ethnicity, age, sexuality or issues around partners though there are patterns within the findings relating to these. The next chapter develops this theme as it seeks to establish the conceptual framework upon which the study is based.

Chapter Two

Conceptual Framework

2.1 Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter I seek to locate my study within a conceptual framework. My stated aim in the study is to explore the experience of women who are headteachers and mothers. From my reading I believe that this is a study about identity and its interplay with the structures imposed externally and sometimes, even more powerfully, internally. These include culture, organisational structure, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, but for the purpose of this study the focus is upon those structures within which women who are headteachers and mothers operate. This chapter includes a literature review of this field, drawing on literature which explores identity, power, and working lives, and then goes on to establish the issues which will be investigated in the study.

2.2 Understanding identity

This section begins by exploring identity with particular reference to the issues of the identity of women who are headteachers and mothers.

The issue at this early point is whether the women in my study are playing out multiple roles and identities – woman, mother, headteacher (besides those less obvious, e.g. partner, daughter, carer, etc.) or whether there is an alternative model for their experience – and a significant area of enquiry is to investigate whether role and identity mean the same thing or inter-relate in some more complex way. It is also important to investigate how the multiple identities relate to each other – are they separate and distinct or is there a complex inter-relationship.

2.2 i The Interplay of Role and Identity

This chapter is an investigation of identity but in much of the research examined for this study [2] identity and role are used as interchangeable terms. The term 'role' is often used in an ill-defined way, but a sense of interpretation or construction of role emerges according to responsibilities and external expectations [3].

Gunter (2001 p. 5) says that "identity is not just the product of the individual but is a socialised and socialising process in which identities can be received as well as shaped." In this way identity is an enabler of playing out a role, which in turn contributes to the development of identity. We might make the distinction between identity as being, and role as doing, as a simple understanding; but the definitions are really more complex because of the developmental effect the one has upon the other [4].

This inter-relationship of identity, role and the way in which this is impacted by society is explored by Gunter (2001). She explores identity in terms of agency and structure, where "agency is concerned with subjective capability and capacity to control", and "structure is concerned with external controls." (p.5). Our identity, then, is shaped according to the level of agency (or control) we are able to exercise, or according to the degree to which the structures within which we operate control or shape who we are and what we do. The way in which we perceive and live out our roles (whether as woman, headteacher or mother) will be dependent in some respects upon this balance. [5]

2.2 ii The Interplay of Identity and Structure

In considering this effect of personal history upon our exercise of agency, Hargreaves (1996) points out that teachers are interlinked with their backgrounds and that this has a direct influence upon the kind of teachers they are or how they play out their role as teachers. Holland and Lave (2001) capture and develop this debate in their description of these sites of interplay as "history in person" (p. 5) as they investigate the way in which "enduring struggles and the cultural production of identity" (p. 5) shape a person. This work explores much wider issues than just personal history as the structure within which identity evolves and roles are enacted. They argue that the conflicts within people as "social, cultural and historical beings" (p. 5) provide a site in which the struggle to develop ("subjects' intimate self making" p.5) is in contention with "local situated practice" (p.5). Holland and Lave (2001) emphasise that the use of the term "struggle" is deliberate in that it "suggests active engagement and avoids static notions of conflicts as stable or self contained" (p.23). The term "history in person" (Holland and Lave 2001, p. 5) is useful in this study as it summarises the way in which identity is the product of this struggle for all persons, but it is particularly useful in examining the influence and impact of gender in this context.

It is important at this point to acknowledge the view of Skeggs (1997) that the study of gender alone is insufficient because it ignores the complex issues of class and culture which, she argues, invariably accompany it [6]. She supports the theme of struggle in identity, saying that women are "best placed to struggle against the forces and powers that oppress" (p.25) [7] [8].

2.2 iii Multiple Identities

Continuing the theme of struggle, the way in which we enact our roles as woman, mother, headteacher etc. are directly linked in these terms to this struggle. These are "multiple identities" or "identities in practice" (Holland and Lave 2001, p. 25) within individuals, and the writers ask what it is that determines the extent to which we highlight or suppress one identity over another ("foreground one kind of identity over others in local contentious practice") in particular circumstances (p. 26). While Holland and Lave (2001) use wider political or socially radical examples of particular group identities suppressing or "crowding out" others (p. 25), they see this as a reflection of local conflicts and the conflict for supremacy within the individual of the identities present. Being a woman, a mother and headteacher involves playing out various roles or "identities in practice" (Holland and Lave 2001, p. 21) and this brief exploration of the concept of role as enacting an identity with all the struggle implied is useful at this point.

The interplay of agency and structure in forming identities is further developed by Gunter (2000) in her review of Bourdieu's understanding of habitus and field. Habitus sums up all that is in our personal history that pre-disposes us to a particular kind of identity, while field pertains to the surrounding structures, each of which consists of its own history, within which we operate. Gunter (2000), like Holland and Lave (2001), describes this as a site of "struggles" (p. 4). She also argues that "positions" within fields are to do with "domination, subordination and equivalence" (p. 4) and depend upon "the access allowed to capital or goods/resources" (p. 4) [9]. There are many sites or fields, including social, political, cultural, reflecting the various arenas of human activity.

The fields within which we operate and the struggle for identity leads to questions about which identity or identities are prioritised at any particular time. An important aspect within the debate around multiple identities is described by Holland and Lave (2001) using Holquist's (1990) term "dialogism" (p. 9). This refers to the massive amounts of stimuli coming to any person in any situation and the choices made about which to respond to – i.e. which identity is brought to the foreground. In this way they say that we "author the world and ourselves in it" (p.10) but in a very complex way influenced by all those historical, cultural, linguistic and social contexts described or implied above. Dialogism indicates an "open-endedness" (p.11) to identity where individuals "are always in a state of active existence" (p.10).

From the literature surveyed here it appears that the inter-relationships between identities and those between identity and role are complex and significant for my study and will, therefore, be investigated further in my fieldwork.

2.3 Ways of Exploring Identity

In this section I explore the ways in which identity has been investigated in the literature and find that there is a focus upon grouping people into shared identities around race, gender, age, physical attributes, etc. These reflect the argument of Holland and Lave (2001) that people within a group may share certain commonalities because of the characteristics of the particular struggle that the group has encountered in its evolution [10]. It may be that the group identity becomes a negative concept because it suppresses the struggles of individuals within the group whose member may share some common features but not others. For example, women are a group

who share a common anatomy but individuality within the group is constrained by the social construction of the identity of a woman.

2.3 i Social Construction and Stereotyping

Branaman (2001) argues that there are "a number of dimensions to the idea that reality is socially constructed," (p.9) and that when these definitions occur within groups they present powerful opportunities for manipulation. The power that she describes of being able to influence the perception of others by the way in which a trusted individual, or one with authority, introduces someone or something has even greater expression in terms of the ability of the establishment to construct a reality about members of particular social groups, whether these are defined in terms of race, age, gender, etc. (Branaman, 2001).

This stereo-typing is explored by Snyder (2001) who found that once stereo-types are established people tend to lock onto evidence which supports the stereo-type and reject evidence which challenges it. This was noted in experiments concerning gender, race and sexuality. It was also of note that people often tended to behave in a way which supported the stereo-type.

Branaman (2001) interprets this stereo-typing as an expectation that the well dressed, well educated person with a higher status job will be seen as being more competent, and because resources tend to be allocated to these people who are likely to be white, middle class males, expectations of competence will follow. She goes further and suggests that whether in the privileged groups or not, these expectations are generally accepted even when there is contradictory evidence.

Howard (2001) accepts the argument that "in most social systems" "the adult, white, middle-class male is the archetypal subject," (and dominant) "whereas children, non-whites, those who are economically disadvantaged, and women, are objects" (and subordinate), (page 102). Those in the dominant groups have "the discursive power to define, locate and order others."

So far, in this chapter, I have explored the concepts of identity, role, agency and structure in social settings and the way in which these have been investigated. In the next section I seek to sharpen the focus of this area with regard to the perspective of gender.

2.4 Gendered Identity

There are many ways in which the inter-play between agency and structure could be explored. Possibilities include race, class, age, sexuality, religious or ethnic group, and no doubt many other sub-groups and their inter-relationships; or looking at individuals and identity [11]. The identities of women as partners, daughters, sisters, carer would all be valid areas of enquiry but as the focus here is on women as headteachers as mothers the investigation will concentrate upon the issues within these identities.

At this point there is a brief exploration of the relationship between gender and biological differences between men and women which might pre-dispose them to certain roles and identities in life. This, in itself could become a major study and I will concentrate on the interpretation of differences rather than their detail. Hill and

Ragland (1995, p7) assert that "most steps marking societal progress, including agriculture, trading, domesticating animals, establishing communities, and early construction, were developed by prehistoric women", and argue that anthropologists have identified some societal groups in history where women have been dominant and have established roles that we would now recognise as traditionally male.

The vast majority of societies, however, seem to have established what we now regard as traditional male and female roles where the male is dominant. These were often perpetuated through religious cultures which supported, and even celebrated male dominance. This is very clearly seen in Victorian society which, as a precursor for attitudes in the twentieth century, is likely to have an influence upon experience in the twenty first century. These attitudes are much deeper than the playing out of roles; they concern the relative values attributed to certain identities, and the opportunities afforded to people within identifiable groups because of these values. Because of the focus of this study there is particular relevance here for male and female identities.

2.4 i Gender and Value

Kimmel (2000) offers an understanding that while there are physical differences between men and women, he does not accept their significance in assigning different value to the identities, i.e. how they should be treated. He also differentiates between the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. He echoes Oakley (1972) in defining sex as the "biological apparatus" while gender is to do with the "meanings that are attached to those differences within a culture" (p.3). He says that gender as in "masculinity" and "femininity" varies in meaning across a whole range of cultural understandings which

become very much removed from biology (p.3). It is also important to note that the terms are often confused and therefore not used in this way.

In terms of identity, Oakley (1972) asserts that gender is made by society and this understanding of gender clearly seeks to limit the agency of women. Kimmel (2000) highlights a common understanding across most cultures that there is a political value to gender where what women do is not as important culturally as what men do. He says that if this inequality were removed, people would be free to express "individual uniqueness as well as our commonality" (p.3), which would give a context to differences such as race [12].

2.4 ii Masculinities and Male Domination

While the focus of the gender debate here is on women, Collinson and Hearn (1996) present an interesting perspective by saying that, "there has been a strange silence, reflecting a taken for granted association, even conflation, of men with organisational power, authority and prestige" (p. 263) as they describe the lack of studies into "the critical analysis of men and masculinities" (p. 263) [13].

This masculine view of power perpetuated to the end of the twentieth century and beyond, but it was also complicated by the wider societal networks which support male domination (the "language of management", "sexual joking", "corporate entertainment", "men-only business clubs", Collinson and Hearn p.264).
The work of Bourdieu (2001) offers some insights into why masculine domination evolved and has now become accepted as the natural order of things. Bourdieu's early work in the 1960s focused upon Kabyle society in attempting to understand

interactions between the individual and society and here he developed the concept of habitus explored above. His work in 1990 related the habitus to the external field in order to understand more about how individuals operate and the effects of social structures. Bourdieu (2001) develops this by interpreting masculine domination as an extension of the imagery of sexual intercourse into social living, and argues that as the sexual act is the primary behaviour of mankind, reflections of the roles taken during sex have almost naturally become the basis of all human intercourse. At a basic level he presents sexual intercourse as happening most naturally with the man on top of (i.e. in domination of) the woman who is therefore subservient to the man. The act of thrusting and penetration prepares man for such aggressive behaviour in society; and equally the woman who is the quiet receiver of the action is prepared for a life of subservience.

Hence, Bourdieu (2001) argues, these roles are so natural that they have become a largely unquestioned fabric of society in terms of the male and female identity. Masculine and feminine identities (as gender) have become confused with male and female biological definitions and so to be masculine requires thrusting, aggressive domination, while to be feminine requires the gentle unassuming acceptance of male power and domination. Bourdieu (2001) presents this as a form of violence which is complex because it has the unwitting consent of the female who is dominated. He also traces the way in which every aspect of society (e.g. the state, the family, the Church and education) has perpetuated this domination to a point where its acceptance is pervasive across all aspects of experience – which accords with Holland Lave's (2001) concept of "history in person" (p.5). [14]

Gender, argues Kimmel, implies "hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference" – i.e. value (2000, p1.) He goes further than my earlier impressions by asking why it is that "virtually every known society is based on male dominance" and in those societies "women and men are perceived as different?" He perceives this through the different roles assigned to men and women and the way in which these roles are valued, particularly in the workplace [15].

Kimmel (2000) attempts to tackle the "myths" (p.xi) that men and women are almost different biological species, indeed as if they come from different planets, men from Mars, women from Venus. He rejects biological, psychological and evolutionary arguments about gender differences and asserts that "gender difference - the assertion of two qualitatively different natures - is the result of gender inequality, not its cause." (Preface, page xi.) In his view, then, gender differences are produced by gender inequality rather than vice versa, and have nothing to do with biology [16].

2.5 Constraints

As an extension of the concern about value, in investigating identity, agency and structure, Acker (1994 p 28) says that sociologists use "double standard[s]" in that they "show an acute awareness of the social constraints" where the actions of men are concerned, but "frequently switch to psychological or biological levels of explanation" when analysing the behaviour of women. As an example she cites the way in which the "under-representation of women" in leadership, is attributed to their "lack of ambition" which ignores issues of agency and structure, underlying the feminist case, which discourage women from attaining such positions. She also accepts that there is a complex perspective added because women, who tend to be the

main teachers of children in primary schools, perpetuate these stereo-types by their real or apparent acceptance of the status quo. She goes on to describe as "artificial" those approaches in sociology which polarise masculine, as "rational, hard, objective", and feminine, as ruled by emotion and subjectivity. She celebrates "women's models" in sociology because they grow from "concrete experience" and from "social knowledge" which "has emerged from dialogue" (p.28) [17].

What these writers describe is a general absence in society of understanding of female identity, or even that identity is gendered. Much of what is described here accounts for the growth of the feminist movement which will be developed in later sections. David (1986) talks of the "invisible experiences of women" (p.11) in investigating the effect that mothers have upon their children's education. While she is not talking explicitly about identity what is described here constitutes a non-identity in political or economic value for women. She explores the drive by Margaret Thatcher's Government of the day to "reinforce and revive the nuclear family" and sees the Government view as a direct response to the issue of working mothers and lone parents. In her view, however, any problems in this complex picture highlight the way in which "mothers as parents are denied equal working opportunities" (p.11). The fact that an external agent is doing this highlights the lack of ability women have in influencing their own lives - a lack of agency. [18]

2.6 Dealing With Sexual Equality Issues

Women, then are seen in the literature as being in the power of the male-dominated structure in society. In exploring ways in which this identity and agency issue can be addressed David (1986) takes up Einstein's (1984) theme of three ways to deal with sexual equality issues as:

- agreeing to compete on the same terms as men;

- withdrawing to a feminine retreat;

- entering the world but working to try to change it in the direction of "woman centred values of nurturance and intimacy" (Einstein, 1984, pp144 –145).

Einstein (1984) argues that the latter strategy aims towards "greater equality, shared decision-making and justice" (p.144-5) and transforms traditions in order to allow women to take up their rightful opportunities in the world. She also acknowledges that most women (at the time of writing) opt for the first or second option. She relates opting for the first option to Steinfels (1976) who argues that it is not enough for women to get into the male dominated arena, they must also challenge it [19].

These issues cause a self perpetuation of issues around gender and its interplay with identity, agency and structure, and Stromquist (1990) highlights the inability of the state so far to improve conditions for women. This is echoed around the world but particularly in developing countries. There is a massive self perpetuation profile with women from low income social groups, and low status ethnic affiliation achieving the lowest levels of education. She argues that classical theories of social inequality are gender blind and do not isolate the relationship of low achievement with gender. Stromquist (1990) argues that such theories where success is meritocratic and depends

upon motivation and intellect ignore inhibiting factors in people's backgrounds and experience [20].

2.6 i Feminist Sociology

Feminist sociology works for the return of control over identity to women and to ensure a serious approach to understanding their reality. Stanley and Wise (1993) add a note of caution that in theorising gender and female identity we must not fall into the rejected position of "expert, analytical and theoretical approaches which are seemingly divorced from personal experience" (p.66). We must therefore resist essentialising – taking one person's experience as representing all the people in that group instead as a possible indicator of some shared characteristics (which echoes Reay and Ball's 2000, caution). This is why the area of my study is of importance – to resist this essentialising and to establish an understanding that individual experience contributes to the knowledge base.

So far the discussion has attempted to problematise the way in which writers in the past ignored gender in exploring identity, and how more recent writers have pushed out the boundaries of traditional research in order to understand the effects upon identity of issues which were taboo or simply ignored, and also to try to present a sense of a woman's identity and what it means to be a woman [21].

2.7 How We Understand Personal Identity Such as Motherhood

This section is an exploration of motherhood as an identity and the way in which it is theorised. In the snapshots of interviews presented by Sikes (1997, p 36-7) there are mixed understandings of the identity of mothers. Some, it seems, believe that their

own identities are to be subordinated in order to provide for their children's needs, while others believe that it is important to retain their own identity as this has a more positive effect upon the development of the child. If these arguments are examined more closely it appears that the motives are, in fact, the same - the benefit of the child. Sikes (1997) refers to this as "the self-denying mother", and "identity and parenthood: being a parent, not a person" (p.36-7). She speaks of a mother having an identity through her children; "being a mother means being constantly made invisible, except as so and so's mother." Some of the interviewees clearly felt that this was simply a different identity, while others had identity only through their relationships with their children. Some said that the experiences and relationships involved in being a mother made them different as teachers.

Sikes makes the point that motherhood touches the identity of every woman, because those who do not have children are called upon to explain why this is the case [22]. Sikes also makes the point that it is assumed that women will automatically love and nurture their children, and have maternal feelings, and this instinct is socially constructed to reinforce what society dictates that mothers should be. Gieves (1989, p. viii) says that "positivist scientists" have used these means so that they "can easily be made to mean whatever is culturally sanctioned at the time, and, when applied to women, can be used to reinforce reactionary prescriptions about their role."

This section is explicitly about the identity of the mother headteacher, and so I will not be exploring issues of identity concerning fathers. Feminist views on motherhood are as diverse as the groups represented within feminism, from those who see it as "even dangerous for women because it defines them solely in terms of their ability to

give birth", to those who "reclaim motherhood as a positive female identity" (Sikes, 1997, p.42). These views shape the way in which female headteachers experience their identity, whether or not they are mothers and Sikes argues that the social construction of motherhood is "not synonymous with 'success' in the world." (1997, p. 45.) Sikes reminds us that the majority of research into motherhood in the past was done by men and ignored feelings and experience as a source of data.

Mothers interviewed by Sikes (1997) reported feelings around love, responsibility, selflessness and sacrifice, and this has become recognised as the culture of motherhood. Society expects this of mothers and also expects these maternal instincts to be available for use by other people's children as with teachers, particularly of primary stage children. Perhaps this is why it 'feels' acceptable for women and mothers to be primary teachers, as long as those teachers remain in that identity with no ambitions beyond this [23]. Perhaps headship is felt to be less acceptable for a woman by society because in the combined role the ambitions and identity of the headteacher is beyond what is acceptable or outside the identity created for women (and so often, accepted by women) by society.

2.8 How Working Lives and Identity are Understood.

There seems to have been a major change in work opportunities for women in the west from the nineteenth and early twentieth century scene. Perhaps it is the link with the working class history of women in service or taking in washing that devalues work for women in the minds of a society perceived as aspiring towards middle class status. Or conversely it may be, in terms of the literature surveyed here that this

serves to support keeping women in subservient positions and out of the leadership arena.

2.8 i The Gender Perspective in Careers and Working Lives

BBC Radio Four News (January 14th 2004) announced that "research shows that the wage gap between men and women is nearly £560 a month" [24]. This very broad and general statement gives little detail in terms of breakdown of types of work, areas of the country, age groups, etc. but in its bold form is, perhaps, an attempt to draw attention to the issue of the different value given to the work that men and women do. Coffey and Delamont (2000) offer statistics regarding women in leadership positions in education which underline the issue. They say that over 90% of Principals in the USA are men, and that while 75% of teachers in primary education in Canada are women, 75% of the Principals are men. Adler (1993) presents statistics showing that of one hundred and eight Chief Education Officers in England and Wales, only sixteen were women. In England and Wales over half of the secondary teachers are women while only 22% of the headteachers were women (Coffey and Delamont 2000, from the statistics available in 1998). While there are growing percentages of women in higher paid and leadership positions, Coffey and Delamont (2000) argue that the percentages are still small, and this is particularly noticeable in jobs which are heavily populated by women (for example, primary school teachers).

Nightingale (2004, p.2) brings this up-to-date reporting Department for Education statistics showing that in Great Britain 56% of secondary teachers are female, but that "male heads out number women by more than two to one" and 88% of teachers in

nursery and primary schools are women but only 61% of Headteachers here are women.

Hill and Ragland (1995) identify a trend of employing women in leadership positions in recent years set against "the dearth of information about the contributions of women in public school administration"(p.ix). They assert that "the theoretical bases of educational leadership are overwhelmingly established on research generated by white males studying white leaders (p.ix) and suggest that this position needs to change, in order to take account of the increasing numbers of women in positions of leadership. These women, they say, are "building new realities" (p.ix). They remind us that where women are portrayed in leadership positions on the television (which not only reflects public views, but also contributes to their perpetuation) they are "disproportionately portrayed" as "manipulative, adversarial, bitchy, and distasteful" (p.8). These issues will be further developed in Chapter Four.

Coffey and Delamont (2000) argue that it is at the application stage that women are so severely under-represented and that this leads to fewer appointments. They echo the concerns above that from this it is assumed that women lack ambition or abilities. Davidson (1985) found that male and female teachers showed the same ambitions but that women did not expect to succeed. Bloot and Browne (1996) also suggest reasons for the deficit numbers of women in educational leadership, and these concern a lack of commitment by women to advancement, the sponsorship of male advancement, and the under-valuing of women's skills and experience because of the perception of leadership as being based on models from a male tradition. This contributes to our understanding of identity, in terms of the way that these are perceived, with women

predominantly giving up their agency, assuming that they have no right to be the ones in control.

This pervades women teachers' behaviour as professionals. The debate about whether teaching is a profession or a semi-profession is closely linked with issues of agency and structure, and is developed by Gunter (2001) who sees the reference of educationalists to structures beyond themselves as detrimental in claiming professional status. She echoes Blackmore (1999) saying that there is an absence of understanding of issues of "gender, age, sexuality and race" (Gunter, 2001, p.143) in exploring professional behaviour .

The shifts in expectations and emphases in education redefine the job whether this is seen in professional terms or not, and it is in this context that this study explores the inter-relationships of the roles and identities of women who are headteachers and mothers, and the extent to which they are able to exercise agency within structures that debate their professionalism.

2.8 ii Value

Earlier in this chapter concerns were expressed about the way in which society places different value upon what men and women do in terms of the status that the particular activities have and the way in which they are rewarded. Within this exploration of working lives there is a different view of professionalism for women than for men. Measor and Sikes (1992) raise concerns that while salaries for men and women in teaching are intended to be equal in terms of published pay scales, this hides

important issues concerning relative earning power through the promotion structure. In exploring reasons for this they suggest that many have seen women as less committed to their work than men and they quote Burgess (1989, p. 90): "teaching is a good job for a woman but a career with prospects for men." [25] Here we return to the view described earlier that, of these role models, a significant percentage of women in such positions exemplify traditional male dominance-type values any way.

If this concerns the working lives of headteachers, Sikes (1999) explores the theme of working lives with teachers in general. While this is broader than the main scope of this study it considers teachers as parents, which will relate to the work on headteachers who are mothers.

2.8 iii Teachers As Parents

Sikes (1999), prompted by her own experience, sets out to explore the experience of teachers who are parents. It is interesting that she identified that the group "share a vocabulary and interests and understandings that are characteristic of, if not distinctive to, them" (Sikes 1999, p. 111). She says that in this understanding there is a notion that "the idea of the teacher as mother is powerful and pervasive" with "fathers, disciplining and wielding power". This introduces the gender context at a different level of consciousness in society and perhaps makes the hope of emancipatory praxis more daunting.

In the interviews presented by Sikes (1999), which were not just about mothers, the teachers interviewed expressed the view that they felt that their identity as teachers had a large impact upon their parenting. Because of their training they felt under

great pressure to give the right sort of nurturing to their children. It is clear that becoming a parent affected the way in which they related to their own and other children and gave them a different kind of insight in the classroom, but it also caused other people to question their commitment to work.

All subjects felt that being parents had made significant contributions to their patience and tolerance with children in school, and some also felt that it had increased their ability to evaluate a child's development. Many said that being a parent gave them an advantage in communicating with parents of children in their class, but some were concerned that others suspected their commitment to work. Sikes (1997) discusses the need to separate aspects of life into public and professional, personal and private and while many teachers denied that they did this, her interpretation was that in reality this *is* what they did [26]. Pascal and Ribbins (1998) interviews with headteachers make brief references to the parent identity [27]. It is interesting that there are only implicit references to parenthood in the interviews, and this aspect of identity is not seen as important in telling the career story.

2.9 The Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this chapter was to establish the conceptual framework for the study. In order to do this I have investigated issues around identity with particular reference to its social construction and the social construction of gendered identity. Holland and Lave's (2001) term "history in person" (p.5), and the concept of struggle in identity, and their work around Holquist's (1990) term "dialogism" (p.9), with Gunter's review of the concepts of habitus and field from Bourdieu (2001) provide

the theoretical underpinning for the study of identity and its interplay with agency and structure. The following conceptual framework grows out of these investigations, and raises questions and issues which give focus to the investigation. This chapter has contributed to the framework by raising issues around:

- the way in which identity is understood and interpreted;

- the extent to which identity is gendered and suggested reasons for this;

- the place of agency and structure within an investigation of identity;

The next chapter will seek to investigate issues around:

- how headship is understood and interpreted;

- the place of agency and structure within these interpretations;

- the nature of the interplay between identity and headship;

Chapter Four will continue to develop the framework by investigating issues around:

- the extent to which headship is a gendered identity;

- the way in which the social construction of headship interplays with the social construction of gender;

Issues within the conceptual framework which are developed across all chapters include:

- the extent to which all or any of these understandings are located in time;

- the extent to which these understandings are influenced by the domains within which researchers operate;

- the extent to which alternative understandings, interpretations and interplays are possible at the beginning of the twenty first century.

These issues may be changed and refined as the study proceeds but they serve as an appropriate focus in locating the conceptual framework.

Chapter Three

Headship: Changing Identities

3.1 Overview of the Chapter

From the issues raised in the Conceptual Framework the purpose of this chapter is to investigate: first, what is known about headship with particular reference to its relationship with identity; second, in what ways this changes over time; third, how leadership theories and research methodology seek to shape this identity; fourth, what research tells us about how headteachers experience headship and leadership and how this relates to identity.

The chapter examines claims that the way in which headship is understood historically and currently is being reworked under the title of leadership, within a political agenda, and that all of these interpretations are influenced by the way in which research is undertaken. Thus, the chapter examines literature about headship with particular reference to the recently established National College for School Leadership (NCSL), the historical context, and the way in which these relate to the identity of the headteacher. The chapter begins by presenting literature about what headship is and its relationship to leadership, including the concepts promoted by the NCSL and other Government agencies; moves on to examine the historical context of headship; and finally uses Gunter and Ribbins' (2003) typology to examine claims that research methodology has influenced outcomes. This is shaped by the questions generated in the Conceptual Framework and also serves to investigate the way in which the headship identity is socially constructed and historically located within the leadership debate. This will be built upon in the next chapter which investigates

claims that research in this area is gendered and contested, and will therefore analyse

the implications of all this for the way in which female headship identity is shaped.

Within this present chapter I will draw upon published work, library and internet

sources.

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3.2 Problematising Headship

This section contrasts the official models of headship [28] with contested realities. In

terms of official models it is interesting that in setting up a body to ensure preparation,

training and development of headteachers at the beginning of the twenty first century

the Government chose to establish the National College for School *Leadership*

(NCSL) which clearly sets out the agenda that headship is to be seen in terms of

leadership. In an examination of the literature in the few years prior to the setting up

of the NCSL the relationship between headship and leadership was already well

established, but with little debate about the motives behind this link or its relationship

to identity. The college established a Think Tank chaired by David Hopkins (2002) to

develop a knowledge pool about headship, but this was confined to the role,

responsibilities, standards – i.e. the professional identity of the headteacher – with no

scope for any other identities which may make-up the headteacher, and no indication

of any understanding that there may be an interaction between them (Hopkins 2002).

Hall and Southworth (1997) summarise what is known about primary headship up to

1997 showing it to be dominated by aspects of "organisational power", "functions and

tasks", the "gendered construction" of the understanding of headship, and the lack of

"sustained studies of headteachers" (p.155). This suggests the omission up to this

point of any consideration of the personal identity profile, or the contested realities of

headteachers, in favour of the socially constructed identity. From the literature associated with the NCSL Think Tank (e.g. Fullan, 2002, and Hopkins 2002) there appears to be no progress in this area since 1997 as the same omissions can be noted.

In the task of understanding the headship identity at the beginning of the twenty first century the fieldwork for this study will be concerned to investigate if there is a tension between official models promoted by the Government, which seeks to establish the headteacher as a leader, and the reality of the people doing the job. A useful source in understanding this official definition of headship is to be found in the Teacher Training Agency's (TTA) National Standards for Headteachers (1998) which is now used as a basis for evaluating the performance of headteachers and for training towards the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). Here it is the tasks and responsibilities or the role of headship which are defined without any reference to the issue of identity or to the everyday reality of those doing the job. Within the standards there is clear emphasis upon headship as transformational leadership [29]. There is an emphasis in the National Standards and in the NPQH upon those qualities associated in the literature (e.g. Fullan 2003, Hopkins 2001, Southworth 1993) with leadership – motivation, inspiration, visioning [30].

3.3 Headship – the Historical Context

This section investigates the way in which headship is understood in the literature and whether this has changed over time. From the vast range of literature on the historical development of headship I shall focus on the work of Grace (1995) with reference to others who contribute to this understanding.

3.3 i The Headmaster Tradition and Social Control

The concept of the Headmaster [31] tradition was established by Norwood and Hope (1909) and followed up in Baron (1956) and underpins more recent investigations into headship. Grace (1995) charts the development of the headteacher from that of the nineteenth century Headmaster as the authoritarian, moral leader, to the entrepreneurial , market place player who juggles budgets and league tables, and accepts the ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the school [32]. He shows how societal influences develop an identity into which the headteacher must fit in order to serve *his* purpose. Grace (1995) argues that the nineteenth century position is located within the "class hierarchy and class-cultural control" (p. 28) of the time, where the headteacher, within this given identity acted as agent in constructing reality for those in his (rarely, if ever, her) charge. It was a given identity which had to be put on like a ready-made garment, and social control and subordination depended upon its fit.

The link between hierarchy and responsibility gave headship a special quality summed up by Grace (1995) as "noblesse oblige" (p. 28). The importance of the issue of respect and respectability for those of the Victorian era is easy for us to underestimate at our point in history and Skeggs (1997) reminds us of the immense power this had as a control mechanism at the time [33].

The identity or agency of the headteacher at that time made it unthinkable for such a person to have risen from the working classes as 'He' had to epitomise the authority of the ruling classes legitimised through both secular authority (that of the class structure) and sacred authority ("ordained by God" Grace 1995, p.28) [34]. In post-

modern times when so many traditional structures and hierarchies appear to have been undermined it is, perhaps, difficult for us to understand the power of this "strongly class-stratified society" (Grace 1995, p. 28) which ensured that headteachers established and maintained "class-cultural control" (p.28); and yet even today issues about positioning and being 'in the know' may have as much to do with social class as education. Links with leadership at a conceptual level are clear in that the headteacher epitomised and inspired others towards the great visions of society.

3.3ii The Modern Professional and the Social Democratic Period

The Second World War is seen by Grace (1995) as a turning point in this picture of the headteacher as "manifest moral energy... and social control" (p. 30). He sees the period from the 1940s to the 1970s as a time of the promise of "greater democracy and social justice" (p. 30) which was to offer better opportunities for all, including the opportunity to establish equality for all in a modern economy which would maximise the talents of all. This demanded a headteacher who would lead through merit "committed to innovation....and consultative in operation" (p. 30). The headteacher, as a modern professional, was to modernise society into a people with team spirit and an acceptance that class structure was out-dated. Grace (1995) reminds us that in practice establishing such a position in "hierarchical social institutions which were resistant to the reforming culture of the time" (p. 30) was a different matter. The issue of identity in headship begins to change here as the position becomes open to people from a broader background. It is still prescribed in terms of its purpose, even if the purpose is different, and continues, therefore, to be given rather than shaped by the personal identity of the headteacher.

These changes led and echoed a fundamental change in social structures and relationships at the time which was potentially dangerous in removing the traditional basis for respect and respectability away from class to merit. This promotion to the position of headteacher through merit would bring those who would oppose the traditions of the past and would be innovators who would change teaching techniques and shape future development. Grace (1995) argues that this professionalism is a glimpse of the possibilities in headship where headteachers are agents, and as an alternative to managerialism. It was to allow relative autonomy to class teachers and leave issues about leadership style to the individual headteacher, with school organisation left in the hands of these professionals.

3.3iii The Entrepreneur

Grace (1995) identifies a trend from the 1960s towards leaders who could inspire change and reform, with the headteacher as "leading professional" (p. 33). Towards the end of the twentieth century Grace (1995) charts yet another shift in headship towards that of entrepreneur. The "discourse of the market" (Grace 1995, p. 39) in education leadership which grew at this time (and has continued to dominate headship) was "born out of the context of cost efficient education" (Grace 1995, p. 86). This has developed in the debate about headteachers as administrators versus moral leaders. Grace (1995) identifies the problem of the polarisation in views about headteachers in the present era between one of administrator (with a balance sheet and an eye on the league tables) and one of visionary leader – a debate which further highlights the gulf between a given identity and the impact of personal identity.

3.3iv The Leader

Perhaps it is within the leadership context, reinforced by the NCSL at the beginning of the twenty first century, that we would expect to find greater scope for the development of the personal identity of the headteacher. The term has associations with being in charge and being able to determine policy and direction. Smulyan's (2000) view of the headteacher dealing with "constantly shifting negotiations" "in multiple contexts" (p.1) points to the authority of a leader in being able to do this, and this authority depending on the agency of the person in the post. However, Southworth (1995), in his analysis of Ron Lacey's authority, argues that it is the position which is the source of the authority rather than anything to do with the headteacher's identity.

Much has already been presented about the head as leader and the socio-political context of this term and this will be further developed in the following sections which analyse the extent to which the modern school leader is able to exercise agency.

3.4 The Headship Role

Considerable attention in Chapter Two was given to the relationship between role and identity and in much of the literature reviewed in this chapter they are used as interchangeable terms. It has been argued in this chapter that professional identity is socially, historically and politically located, and Grace (1995) presents an historical development of headship which shows the position to be one of a leader who is a servant of the times and political need. In much of the modern debate in the primary sector about what a headteacher is, the emphasis has changed to focus on what a headteacher does (i.e. his/her role [35]) rather than what he/she is, and brings us back

to the theme noted earlier about the desire of politicians to use research agendas to secure reform which could diminish the agency of the headteacher [36]. Recent legislation supporting teacher and headteacher performance management reflects this concern.

Hall and Southworth (1997) further develop these themes as they analyse the issues pertinent to headship pre and post ERA. As in Grace (1995) Hall and Southworth (1997) express concern about the lack of "research-based analyses of headship" (p.151). They identify the work of Coulson (e.g. 1976, and 1980) as a major contribution to the literature over many years because they see a development of the understanding of the role in line with the way in which the role itself changes over time. They develop his view saying that prior to the ERA headship was "a blend of personal control and moral authority, derived largely from a Victorian conception of headship and which was implicitly gendered" (Hall and Southworth 1997, p.152). Hall and Southworth (1997) interpret Coulson's (1980) understanding of headteachers at this time as "pivotal, proprietal and paternalistic" (p.153). The theme of power and identity is strong in literature about headship in this pre-ERA phase, but it seems that the headteacher could only operate within the given identity which was regarded as acceptable at the time. Post-ERA they see a shift towards the sharing of power and decision-making [37] but a retention of control which undermines the emphasis upon developing leadership in others and shared vision and values. The greater shift in this era is towards the entrepreneurial style of headship where the head is seen as selling the school and as responsible for liaisons with many sectors beyond the school gates.

Hall and Southworth (1997) link this with the work of Grace (1995) as a movement from moral to market-style leadership; but Grace (1995) goes further than this in showing that the current context of headship means that the headteacher has been redeveloped and reshaped into a leader within a model of leadership, and that there is a need to understand the vast amount of literature about how headteachers undertake their work as leaders, and the types of leadership models presented.

As mentioned earlier literature about headship since this time is dominated by the leadership theme. This continues to support a view of headship which has little to do with the identity of the person in the post. It is also interesting that Fullan (2003) highlights the need for headteachers to concentrate on the moral aspects of education in order to move schools forward. In terms of where this historical account began, with the Victorian moral leader, we might reasonably ask whether headship as a concept and identity has really changed. Gronn (2003) uses the term "designer leadership" (p.284) to summarise "the technique of cloning" in headship at the beginning of the twenty first century. He argues that this cloning is used "to discipline leadership practice" whereby school leaders would behave in "conformity with a leadership design blueprint" (p.284) and select particular forms of data to support their positions. This is particularly interesting when set against Charles Clarke's [38] speech to new headteachers at the NCSL conference in November 2003. He argued that education needed creative and divergent leaders with "the decisive end of the one-size-fits-all approach". His claim that "effective school leadership is critical to the achievement of all our reforms" and that OFSTED have found that as yet "the quality of leadership is higher than the quality of teaching", must be set into context against the frameworks for effectiveness set out in the National Standards and

NPQH described above. Within this picture it is only the detail of the leadership and not its broader design and goals which move away from the one design supported by the literature selected by the Government.

The way in which methodologies in research impact upon findings is explored by Gunter and Ribbins (2003) who develop this by presenting six "Typologies of Knowledge Production in the Field of Educational Leadership" (p. 261), building upon Gunter (2001) and Ribbins and Gunter (2002). In this investigation into knowledge in the field they address issues around the background of those producing or "mapping" (p. 254) the knowledge in order to analyse purpose and emphasis. For the purpose of this study I shall focus upon the "Provinces" (p. 261) identified and then examine the contribution writers within the provinces make to understanding headship.

3.5 Knowledge and Leadership

While the broader understandings of the way in which headship identity develops are located in time and changing social constraints, the sections above show that service to a social agenda has remained constant, however much the particular agenda may have changed. The contention in this section is that the way in which headship is investigated and presented has a direct impact upon the findings and that it may be that particular forms of research are legitimised because they support a particular agenda. This section, then, takes a step back from what is known about headship in order to explore how this knowledge has been uncovered and what significance the methodologies have for this study. The table presented below explains the provinces.

Figure 3.1

"Knowledge Provinces in the Field of Educational Leadership" Ribbins and Gunter (2003, p. 262)

Knowledge Domain	Description
Conceptual	Concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology, and with conceptual clarification.
Descriptive	Seeks to provide a factual report, often in some detail, of one or more aspects of, or factors, relating to leaders, leading and leadership.
Humanistic	Seeks to gather and theorise from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and managers and those who are managed and led.
Critical	Concerned to reveal and emancipate practitioners from injustice and oppression of established power structures.
Evaluative	Concerned to measure the impact of leadership and its effectiveness of micro, meso and macro levels of interaction.
Instrumental	Seeks to provide leaders and others with effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational and system level goals.

This model will be used to investigate the link between methodology and findings in the literature concerning headteachers as leaders in primary schools.

3.6 Research Within the Provinces Investigating Headteachers as Leaders in Primary Schools.

This section investigates primary headteachers as leaders in literature which is representative of the provinces outlined above. I have chosen examples from each province in order to highlight the way in which headship and leadership is presented [39]. It should be noted that headship is used as a generic term which on closer scrutiny has an implicit link in the literature with secondary headteachers. There are important insights within this generalised work which will inform the following sections but, as this study has a focus on primary headteachers, the literature about headteachers in the primary phase is of particular importance.

3.6i The Conceptual Province in Research into Educational Leadership in the Primary School

Ribbins and Gunter (2003) characterise research in this province as being concerned with ontology and epistemology. This is fundamentally linked to understanding how knowledge is formed and used, and its link with values. There is a philosophical basis to this work which gives valuable scope for discussion of methodology and values and contributes to the development of theory around the philosophy underpinning educational leadership. However, there is no work in this province which deals specifically with the philosophical issues around primary heads and headship which means that the theme of identity in primary headship is not explored.

As an example of the way in which literature from this province contributes to the development of the educational leadership debate more generally Hodgkinson (e.g.1983, 1991) contributes to a philosophical debate arguing that organisations like

schools are founded upon logic and rationality which are really assumptions which have not been investigated or challenged. He argues for a humanistic view where values are at the centre of such organisations with leaders taking part in philosophical debate (1983). This finds support in, for example, Evers and Lakomski (1991) who argue that leadership is presently conceived too narrowly because society is experienced as "neo-feudal" (p.15) and organisations like schools tend to reflect this picture. They argue for a moral and ethical perspective to leadership where identity is expressed more fully in terms of the individual instead of purely in terms of being part of the organisation. This is also the case in Fullan (2003) who argues for school leadership to bring a moral and ethical dimension to the school. These writers' views are not specific to a particular phase of schooling but treat schools as homogenous groups.

These perspectives do not sit well with the 'given' headteacher identity established through the Government's agenda and yet they seem to be arguing for some common elements like shared decision-making and clear values. It is in the detail of what these mean in real experience that the difference is found. In NCSL terms the shared-decisions fit within a clearly set-out framework of action and goals while in the philosophical approach people would be free to explore much more widely; the values of headship within the philosophical approach would be a matter for debate or reflection.

There are overlaps here with research from other provinces and it is important to note that much work has elements aligned with more than one province.

3.6ii The Descriptive Province in Research into Educational Leadership in the Primary School

Research in this province is concerned with factual reporting. Little published work, however, concentrates solely upon reporting and describing, as the point of research generally is to analyse and present findings. The consequence of this is that observation and description are largely missing from the literature. Because we don't have purely descriptive accounts we don't have the material through which to interrogate identity. Elements of work from other provinces use description and reporting as a basis for analysis. The following writers allow their subjects a voice to express the range of their feelings and concerns which has an empowering quality and is particularly helpful in exploring experience and identity.

Examples include Hall's (1996) use of description presented through the experiences of the headteachers in her sample and to develop her argument that women have to break through a glass ceiling in order to access leadership and management positions. Southworth (1995), in focusing on the headship experience of his subject, Ron Lacey, and on ten primary headteachers also uses description as the basis for his analysis. Pascal and Ribbins (1998) allow the headteacher subjects to describe their experience as the basis for their understanding of headship. Coleman's (2001, 2002) subjects describe their experience as a basis for her analyses.

3.6iii The Humanistic Province in Research into Educational Leadership in the Primary School

This biographical approach gives the headteacher a voice and acknowledges his/her identity through the use of life history and biography. It is concerned with

historiography and the way in which knowledge is formed and investigates headteachers as people rather than as one fulfilling a role. It also gives the headteacher some control over what is regarded as important in headship and recognises the qualities that the person brings to the job – hence recognising that there is no one-fit identity to the headteacher role. This challenges current thinking because it allows the headteacher a commentary on what is important and a sense of agency, instead of the one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. Much of this work has elements which fit into the critical province of research (e.g. Hall, 1996, Coleman 2001, 2002 [40]), but will be used to inform the general leadership debate.

As Geoff Southworth has been appointed as the Director of Research at the NCSL and has done much research into primary headteachers it is useful to examine his study (1995) of a male headteacher, Ron Lacey, in this province. This ethnographic case-study revealed the interplay of the professional identity and positional authority. Southworth (1995) summarises this interplay in the term "the head's occupational self" (p.156) though this takes no account of personal identity or any of the other identities which may have been present – e.g. father, partner, son, etc. In fact he says that Ron Lacey becomes the headteacher (i.e. that the headteacher identity becomes the sum of who and what he is, so that his other identities are just roles that he plays out through his main identity). This is perpetuated in Southworth (1999) which charts changes and consistencies in the work of headteachers over time. There were clear patterns in responses but personal and other identities beyond the professional were still absent. There is some evidence across this work, however, that the personal and professional identity were either confused or so integrated as to make them one. (Southworth 1999) [41].

Southworth's (1995) analysis of Lacey's experience as headteacher leads him to seek an alternative model for leadership where power and authority are shared to a greater extent. It is interesting that this conclusion is in accord with those from the conceptual, critical and evaluative domains.

Interview and observation is used in this province to examine the "character of leaders" as opposed to the characteristics of leadership (Rayner and Ribbins 1999, p.3). Hall (1997) argues that this shift in understanding is crucial in order to address "theories associating management with masculinity" (p.321). Hall and Southworth (1997) and Gronn (1996) argue that little is known about headteachers as people and that ways of conducting such investigations need to be devised through this approach; and here there is a recognition that the personal identity of the headteacher matters.

Best (1983), Lacey (1970) and Richardson (1973) among others within this province refer to the need to understand how those involved in schools define their roles for themselves, but Gunter (2001) argues that many of the surveys and interviews which took place earlier within this approach tended to be used in a manner which tells the stories that the authors devise. In work by Ribbins and Marland (1994), Pascal and Ribbins (1998), Rayner and Ribbins (1999), Ribbins and Sherratt (1992) there is a move towards the headteacher being seen as a co-researcher in the process with more control over the direction of the interview and therefore what is seen as important within their identity.

Ribbins and Sherratt (1999) attribute a richer insight in this collaborative situation, where there is acknowledged subjectivity, than in the objective outside observer tradition. Gunter (2001) regards this move towards understanding "how a complex professional life unfolds" through an "emphasis on how meaning is developed and constructed (p.58) as a more informed position in what headship is all about. Gunter's (2001) view that this more open approach of subject and interviewer as a "collaborative struggle" (p.60) highlights the ability of this approach to reveal the impact of experience when the headteacher is involved in its analysis.

Generally within this approach the concern is to present, describe, analyse and understand the experience of headship, but it stops short of validating this evidence through triangulation or seeking to use the findings to bring about change. Because it focuses upon the experience of the subject, presented with the language and with the emphases that he or she chooses, this approach has much to contribute to studies of identity though issues around agency are perhaps less well developed. It is, however, a valuable resource for my study which, in focusing upon issues around identity, is located mainly within the critical province.

3.6iv The Critical Province of Research into Educational Leadership in the Primary School

A key writer in this field, Grace's 1995 work has already been extensively used in this chapter to explore the way in which headship has developed over time to achieve social control and reform, providing the reader with insights into the location of power and control with central government. Gunter (1997) uses the critical approach to bring this historical analysis further up to date by providing a critique of the

reliance of management training upon the evaluative and instrumental province of research.

An example of work from the province that goes beyond looking solely at leadership is found in the work of Jeffrey and Woods (1994 and 1998) who used studies to investigate the effect of OFSTED Inspections on schools. These fall into the critical province because they critique the inspection approach using the experience of those inspected and find it expensive and inadequate to present the total experience of the school.

The critical approach investigates power structures through interviews, using theories of power from the social sciences, characterised in Gunter (2001) by Ball (1990, and 1994), Blackmore (1999) [42], Grace (1995), Menter et al (1997), Smyth and Shacklock (1998). Gunter (2001) presents research in this province as having a concern for "historiography and the way knowledge is produced and used" (p.60). She identifies a link between social pressures and structures as a means of control, and research here has "an emancipatory goal in opening up covert technologies" (p.60) and tends to be feminist in nature.

Within the feminist approach, Coleman (2002) in her investigation into headship introduces her work with the statement that "leadership in all walks of life is generally identified with men" (p.vii). She finds through her study that, despite all the rhetoric about equal opportunities, "a culture remains in which men are automatically seen as leaders" (p.160) even though "there is a consensus among headteachers on management style", "the style that is labelled 'feminine'" (p.161). While this study is

of secondary heads it is a very large scale investigation among all the women secondary heads in England and Wales and 670 male heads and has much to contribute to our understanding of headship within this province of research. Coleman (2003) uses this and previous studies to argue that "orthodox leadership is male", and that the "orthodox, although stereotypical version of a 'macho' style of male leadership ... may be as inappropriate for men as it is for women" (p.325). These will be followed up in Chapter Four but are used here to indicate something of the scope of work within this domain.

Issues of social justice have a high profile in this approach, and Gunter (2001) says that these are made "explicit" in such studies (p.61). It is also in this type of study that Gunter (2201) says that issues about power, and identity are most explicit. She cites Blackmore (1999) as challenging power structures and gender inequality which are perpetuated by the very pre-occupation with leadership that all these researchers are studying. My study is located within this province because identity is a strong theme within such work underpinning issues of power, agency and structure. It acknowledges the impact and interplay of aspects like gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.

3.6v The Evaluative Province of Research into Educational Leadership in the Primary School

The evaluative approach identifies variables to be measured in the impact of the headteacher on learning outcomes through a multi-level modelling approach, characterised in Gunter (2001) by Leithwood et al (1996) and Mortimore et al (1998). It involves measuring impact through inspection, monitoring and the like. This work is often cited as evidence for positions taken up in the instrumental approach, though

Gunter (2001) argues that the evidence used is often inconclusive. As in the instrumental approach it ignores issues around, for example, identity, gender, ethnicity, and the interplay between these and professional identity. The approach values the objectivity and neutrality of the researcher, seeing the headteacher as the object to be abstracted and measured. The approach is used by, for example, Craig (1989) and Davies and Ellison (1994) as the basis for the school effectiveness and school improvement movement in the primary sector, but tends to neglect issues around drawing global conclusions from studies in specific circumstances.

By selecting David Hopkins to lead the NCSL Think Tank (2002) the Government has shown that this is the province preferred for educational reform, as Hopkins' work characterises such research. The concept highlighted by the work of the Think Tank (Hopkins, 2002) is that of the organisation's capacity to develop, and the head's role in this based on Fullan (2000, p.1). Hopkins (2001) reviews the influence of the transactional and transformational traditions in school leadership in building this capacity, but argues that their stereotypes as strong central control versus decentralisation are too simplistic. Southworth (1993) also found that school leadership was more complex. The multiplicity of tiny transactions were "the vehicle for the leader's message" (p.78), and "the transactions are particles of the transformations the leader seeks" (p.79). The arbitrary separation of the two within the evaluative and instrumental provinces is further evidence of the lack of rigorous understanding of the issues involved [43]. These are entirely professional characteristics which take no account of any other dimensions of the person of the headteacher or leader. [44]

To have a College focused specifically upon school leadership, setting defined criteria and standards for those in leadership positions, appears to be a massive investment and creative step for a Government to take. Much within its framework emphasises values led leadership with a discourse around leadership for learning which is promoted across the provinces of research. There is, however, another possibility which necessitates a closer examination of the way in which it uses published research. It may be the case that the Government intends to continue the theme of social control and manipulation by ensuring that only those who meet the design specification will accede to such positions. If this is the case then headteachers will operate within such a tightly defined structure that agency will be severely limited. It may be that the NCSL is a means of extending this manipulative approach through its middle management programmes to those who are in senior positions and, therefore, through the standards and requirements for advancement in education, to society itself. [45]

The Think Tank Report (Hopkins 2002) sets out "Ten School Leadership Propositions", the "Principles" for leadership learning, and the "Characteristics" of leadership learning from research about successful school leadership. It fails, however, to define what is meant by successful or to recognise that published work presents many contradictory stances on what constitutes both school leadership, and ignores evidence from many other domains. The approach overlaps with the Instrumental province where the how-to-do-it style or "the ringbinder approach" (Gunter 1997, p. 4) characterises a body of work which ignores the very complex make up of social institutions like schools and the need for leaders to use their identity and to act as agents.

Within the vast range of feminist research (e.g. Blackmore 1999, Coleman 2001, 2002, Hall 1996) there is a criticism that such an approach to research is characteristically masculine and the failure to take account of the broader dimensions undermines its influence.

3.6vi The Instrumental Province of Research into Educational Leadership

The instrumental approach to educational research (characterised in Gunter 2001 by Caldwell and Spinks 1988 and 1992) reviews published evaluative research in order to "cherry-pick, package and trade know how" (Gunter 2001, p. 40) in what is felt to be attractive, and tells heads how to do it, therefore side stepping any issues of the personal identity of the headteacher. As in other provinces this is largely aimed at a generic understanding of headship [46] with little focusing specifically upon primary heads. Notable within the primary sector are Davies and Ellison (1990), who give guidance on managing the primary school budget, and Playfoot et al (1989), who present a handbook for managing primary schools.

This approach reflects the Victorian view of headship as an identity in itself to be put on. Gunter (1997, p. 4) calls this "Jurassic leadership", or, developing Halpin (1990) "the ringbinder approach". It is important to note, however, that Caldwell and Spinks (1998) dispute this as a lack of understanding of their work, but Hall and Southworth (1997) cite the growth in the production of handbooks and the uncritical acceptance of solution models at the time as similar evidence. Gunter (1997) says that this occurs through "a collaboration between entrepreneurial activity and Government agencies"

(p.40) giving "business opportunities" to those involved in the school improvement and school effectiveness drive.

This approach is also used by Leithwood et al (1996) to support claims about transformational leadership with limited empirical evidence. Gunter (1997) argues that this approach "seems to be more about justifying a particular model of leadership than about seeking to understand how leadership is practised" (p.55). She claims that much of the work on effectiveness which falls into this paradigm "is still regarded as conceptually and empirically limited" because it fails to take account of the "context in which leadership takes place" (p.56).

Ribbins and Gunter (2002) accept that the approach is very attractive to "hard pressed and sometimes impatient policy makers, managers and leaders" because "it seeks to provide leaders and others with effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational and system level goals" (p.376). However, they express concern at the "quick fix" mentality which disregards issues about methodology. They question the myriad Government initiatives which are based upon this approach, and ask important questions about the Government's Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (TTA, 1998). Millions of pounds have been committed to this training; headteachers have been called upon to change or confirm their practises according to the outcomes of the programme, and yet no rigorous or thoroughly tested research base has been published to support the 'recipe' format initiative.

This knowledge province is seen, therefore, as lacking the rigour to satisfy the standards of academic research. There is nothing within this approach to

acknowledge the interplay of personal and professional identity or to understand the way in which personal qualities may enhance professional identity. Working lives, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality are all issues which are absent within this body of work.

3.7 Summary

Mapping the field through the knowledge provinces means that many questions are raised about where headship and leadership are located in the social framework at the beginning of the twenty first century. Further, if we examine what is revealed by the knowledge provinces in relation to the conceptual framework of this study there is a trend of manipulating issues around identity, and to legitimise particular approaches. There appears to be a conceptual mis-match between the local management of schools born out of the Education Reform Act of 1988, and the ever increasing centralised agenda for school reform to a particular recipe now epitomised by the leadership models promoted by the NCSL. The mis-match is given even sharper focus and overlaps with concern about the exercise of agency in choices regarding professional development, by the intention of the Government that eventually no-one will be appointed to headship unless he/she has successfully completed the NPQH. School Governors will be choosing from different versions of the same model in appointing new headteachers.

In terms of the original conceptual framework for this study this chapter appears to be telling us that the professional identity of headship is now understood firmly in terms of delivering a Government agenda (Grace 1995, Gunter 1997, 2000, 2001). While the emphases may have changed over time, this purpose has not, in that the work of

Grace (1995) describes headship at any point in history as an instrument of social control, and in the literature of the last decade there is a perpetuation of this trend. This is how headship is and has always been understood and interpreted, but the modern picture ensures much tighter control through the National Standards for Headteachers, the NPQH, OFSTED and performance management.

There is a strong argument here that headship has been shown historically to be inherently male in character because of the way that it has been constructed by society. It is clear that the model constructed by the NCSL, with its reliance on the instrumental and evaluative provinces, continues to establish those criteria which fit the masculine profile. With such tightly directed parameters directions will only change if Government policy recognises the broader research from all provinces [47].

In exploring the literature on headship and leadership in terms of the mapped provinces there is the opportunity as shown by Gunter and Ribbins (2003) to assess the way in which the purpose of research impacts upon its findings; and whether the kind of research undertaken to date has influenced that understanding [48]. As my study seeks to investigate the subjective experience of female headteachers who are mothers, with a desire to contribute to emancipatory praxis, my work falls mainly into the critical arena. As a final note I cite Oakley (2000) and others who argue that headship and leadership is gendered terrain, and that issues of identity and its gendered understanding are crucial aspects in any such study. These themes will continue to run through my work.

Chapter Four

Gender and Headship

4.1 Introduction

In terms of the conceptual framework of this study, this chapter seeks to investigate, the way in which gender affects, or is affected by, the interplay between identity and headship. The investigation here is concerned with women who are headteachers and mothers, and so there is a focus upon the head as woman and, where possible, as mother. This is not about evaluative comparisons concerning the relative merits of male or female heads, but rather about what it means to be a woman as headteacher [49].

In investigating what is known about female headship, however, I draw upon published research evidence in order to explore the claim that headship occupies gendered territory and is therefore presented as a given identity [50] which is more accessible to those who display the characteristics of one gender rather than the other. In Chapter Three the claim that headship is constructed as gendered was established and in this chapter I seek to determine to what extent this has been interpreted as an inherent gender bias. If this latter is the case, then I ask whether this is because of the historical perspective of headship, and whether the way in which headship has been researched contributes to this gendered picture and has therefore helped to shape the headship identity. I also investigate the implications for women achieving headship, or taking on this given identity; why it is that some do achieve this and what causes

them to be accepted as successful or otherwise in headship (or what are the issues once in headship?) [51]

4.2 The Gendered History of Headship

From the previous chapter, Grace's analysis (1995) of the historical development of headship from Victorian times to the present day shows that the understanding of headship is a masculine identity and that this is socially constructed [52]. Here it is interesting to consider whether there is a point at which something which is gendered by construction becomes so embedded that it becomes an inherently gendered identity for succeeding generations. Coleman's (2002) study presents a view of headship in which masculinity is so embedded that the latter argument seems to be the case. While the men and women involved express concern about this separation of headship qualities, with male qualities clearly being regarded as superior, there appears to be "no radical feminist consensus on how to move forward" (p.160).

Reay and Ball (2000), developing Grace (1995), say that the traditions he describes have led to "the conflation of traditional male qualities with those of leadership" (p.145). Drawing on Blackmore, (1993), Blackmore and Kenway (1993), and Weiner (1995) Reay and Ball say that in this way "management is commonly conceptualized as 'masculine', concerned with 'male' qualities of rationality and instrumentality" (p.145) [53]. They develop this, saying that this has led women in management to imitate men's styles of leadership and to be more like men than women. Indeed they use the work of Schein (1973 and 1975) to build the argument that women in such positions are "more like men than men themselves" (p.145), which suggests that the

professional or given identity of headship can push out those aspects of personal identity which define individuals in the job.

Coffey and Delamont (2001) argue that at the end of the twentieth century there was a political move to "re-establish and redefine" (p. 60) professional and civil relationships "during a period of economic and social change", with "new economic needs." At a time when masculine authority might have been seen as an inherent value, legislation on Equal Opportunities was intended to liberate women and those others who faced discrimination in employment. Blackmore (1999) says that in practice it amounted to little more than quotas for the number of women employed (p.95) rather than a real spirit of opportunity and calls it "managing diversity" rather than "managing for diversity" (p.101).

In spite of the vast changes in the requirements of the labour market, and the political state of the world, politicians have continued to use education as a vehicle of social control and in order to promote their version of social justice, and this according to Grace (1995), and Hall (1996), etc. is inherently gendered.

At this point there is a need to make more explicit what this 'gendering' is about. I am not intending to use gendered headship as a value-laden term, but rather as a descriptor in order to find out what is understood about headship. My focus is whether in people's perceptions headship is automatically linked with gender, but also whether women 'do headship' differently - whether there is a link with the gender aspect of personal identity. Whether this gender bias is a fundamental aspect of the meaning of headship or an inherited construction is more difficult to define.

Literature drawn upon in the 'Gendered History of Headship' section earlier in this chapter suggested that the gender perspective has been very powerful in developing a socio-linguistic link which affects perceptions and interplays with practice.

Coleman (2002) argues that "a culture remains in which men are automatically seen as leaders and women are somehow judged as inferior and feel they have to prove their worth" (p.160). This work uses survey and previous interviews to establish that the stereo-types in attitudes to headteachers who are women remain, and to challenge them. In reading the responses of the women involved their acknowledgement of their need to prove their worth, their isolation and acceptance of male models of headship, almost legitimises this view.

Hall (1996) presents a critical evaluation of the link between management and masculinity, echoing Hoyle (1986) that the 'man' in MANagement suggests the masculine task and therefore alienates women. It may also suggest that those women who achieve the position have sold out their educational values in favour of the market driven entrepreneurial drive.

4.3 Women as Headteachers

This present section attempts to identify whether women headteachers' experience is affected by this gendered picture of headship. Grace (1995) and Hall (1996) note that the literature on headteachers has not taken account of issues relating to women as the bulk of the research deals with men in the post. Hill and Ragland (1995) agree that "little literature focuses on women leaders in education" (p.ix). However, Grace (1995) and Hall (1996), from the small numbers of women involved in their studies

find certain trends in the experience of such women. They agree that gender was not "a simple predictor" (Grace 1995, p.181) of styles of management, as these depended more upon professional experiences prior to headship. Coleman (2002) also found similar trends in the experience of female heads. Isolation, bullying by male heads during meetings, were some of the issues, but they also expressed some advantages, e.g. "being noticed" (p.127), "the ability to defuse aggressive male behaviour" (p.126), being able to "turn on the charm and use feminine wiles to get their way" (p.127).

Hall (1996) noted a difference, expressed by some of her sample, in the interpretation of issues like power, and a contention by one subject, determined that a female style of management exists, that "texts on managerial style and models do not pay heed to anything other than male roles." (p.85), therefore ignoring personal identity. Blackmore (1999) says that this is because men see women as a threat to their leadership roles (p.118) in what she calls "the boys' club" (p. 130). She says that women were given leadership opportunities in order to bring about change which men were unable to do because it threatened too much of their heritage, but she also criticises the "blame all men" culture (p.145) which has given rise to anti-feminist movements. While Blackmore (1999) accepts that female leadership has different emphases (for whatever reasons) she expresses the need to avoid the "romanticization of women's leadership work" (p.187).

As my study focuses upon women as headteachers Coleman (2002) provides interesting insights in her study of male and female headteachers. She analysed adjectives chosen by men and women to describe their leadership style and found that,

while there were slight differences, men and women tended to choose adjectives "from the feminine paradigm: 'aware of differences', 'caring', intuitive and tolerant'" (p.111). This supports the view that the stereo-types are no longer an accurate picture but that men feel under pressure to maintain them.

Grace (1995), however, argues that other accounts also support the existence of "qualities claimed for a distinctive female leadership" (p.182) which demonstrates "care for pupils and teachers and care about social relationships with pupils and teachers" (p.182.). If we examine the life histories of the women studied by Hall (1996) it is clear that social background and expectations are a clear link to this picture.

Hall's (1996) study showed a concern among women heads about the way in which managerialism would affect the social relationships outlined above. An important distinction noted by both authors in the attitudes of men and women heads was seen in the area of teamwork. The women headteachers studied saw teamwork as a natural part of school, while men felt that they had created the teamwork within their schools. It was also noted that women headteachers' language about their schools lacked the competitiveness of market values (League Tables, etc.) which were an important feature of the male headteachers' discourse. Reay and Ball (2000), however, argue that in order to succeed as headteachers both men and women must comply with the pressures of the market established by the Government of the day and that the traditionally accepted female characteristics didn't fit into the context of the late 1990s. Coleman (2002) supports the view that managerialsim, "linked to their

implicit rationalism" (p.11), is "a concept that has much in common with the standard male stereotype of leader" (p.32).

Grace (1995) expresses concern about the pressure that this might put on women headteachers in the climate of education in the market place (p.183) and raises a question about whether this will make headship less attractive to women. Grace (1995) argues that women have to satisfy male expectations about headship, taking on the given identity, in terms of "strong leadership in disciplinary and social control terms" (p.184), and that this demonstrates that all those expectations of the Victorian Headmaster have continued to dominate our thinking - and these expectations are expressed in values which continue to be characterised as male. Hall (1996) refers to "the weight of school mythology" (p.63) as headteachers in her study told her that parents still came to school asking for the 'Headmaster'. From this Grace argues that "contradictions" (p.186) in expectations have arisen in that on the one hand there is a demand for the "consultative styles of educational leadership" (p.186), (labelled female) but this is contrasted against a continued "trend towards hierarchy, line management and executive action" (p.186) (labelled, male and patriarchal).

4.3i Critical Leadership and Emancipatory Praxis

Hall (1996) looks to "critical leadership" which "liberates rather than controls" (p 5), brings "power to" rather than "power over" (p. 5) has a "concern with ethics and morals, not just efficiency and means" (p. 5) and "stimulates organisational change through mutual education"(p. 5), to challenge these assumptions and associations. This would completely undermine the given headship identity. She draws upon Foster (1989), Southworth (1995), Blackmore and Kenway (1993) and Shakeshaft

(1989) to describe this as "emancipatory leadership" (p. 5) challenging traditionally masculine understandings of school leadership. Further, she shares Grundy's (1993) understanding of "emancipatory praxis" (p. 6) which occurs when this leadership impacts upon opportunities for other staff to "control their knowledge and practice" (Grundy 1993, p.174).

The authors above point to the expectations of people in particular roles and the link with gender, race, disability and family background as shaping these identities and constricting agency. It is emancipation in these terms that is the goal here. This critical leadership and emancipatory praxis are intended to be cross-gender, giving men and women true equal opportunities which root out all the issues of social expectation and upbringing. Hall (1996) draws upon Schein's (1989) work in describing the "androgynous manager in whom male and female characteristics are blended" (Hall 1996, p.2), but prefers "a view of school leadership and management that draws on behaviours which are the exclusive property of neither men nor women" (p.3). This suggests that the given identity of the headteacher, outlined in Chapter Three as a historical social phenomenon and perpetuated through the evaluative and instrumental research provinces, can be resisted or changed. It is certainly the intention of those within the feminist approach that this should be so. The barrier to this, at present, is that the NCSL, set up by the Government, appears to be giving strong support to findings from the evaluative and instrumental provinces.

4.4 Barriers to Access to Headship

In accessing headship positions various issues and barriers are noted in the literature. Hill and Ragland (1995) suggest that one of the problems here is that high status

women do not always exhibit the characteristics of emancipatory praxis, and therefore complicate the argument, by accepting the male view, betraying the equal opportunities agenda and disadvantaging those seeking headship. This is complex in nature because it is attributable to all of the issues discussed in this chapter and highlights the concern that unless women accept the structures and expectations in place, and therefore the given identity, they would not accede to headship. It is also important to note the point made by Reay and Ball (2000) that essentialising women undermines their identity. The generic term 'women' includes women with many different perspectives, views, values, etc.

Coleman (2002) describes issues in accessing headship around attitudes of Governors [54] from expressing concerns that women would not be able to cope with discipline, that women candidates may want to start families, to commenting upon dress, and even to one candidate being groped by a male Governor during lunch.

One of the great difficulties for aspiring women presented in this account is that women who have achieved leadership positions have failed to mentor others. Reasons suggested include fear that if they are the "token" woman, their position will be at risk. There is a similar trend in the tradition of seeing women as the inferior or weaker sex. Hill and Ragland (1995) reason that this "has been comforting and satisfying to the self image of others" (p.15), and the habit of men interrupting women in meetings or taking the credit for successes is part of this same fear. Women are conditioned and educated to under-achieve, and those who break out of this mould are treated with suspicion - even by other women. Hill and Ragland present an argument

that these barriers to women achieving success "range from a personal lack of confidence to a fear of challenging the cultural expectations of their role" (p. 16).

Hill and Ragland (1995) explore the way in which the "baggage of the past" (p. 7) perpetuated into the present has prevented the equal opportunities agenda from being achieved. They present issues like, "male dominance of key leadership positions", "lack of political savvy", "lack of career positioning", "lack of mentoring", "lack of mobility", and "internal barriers and bias against women" (p. 9) as barriers to women achieving leadership positions. They argue that men vacating leadership positions are more likely to sponsor men to follow them, and that the characteristics they display, once felt to be successful, naturally become the desired characteristics of the job. This disadvantages women, except those prepared to take on those male characteristics - and so perpetuating the same expectations and the gender profile. Reay and Ball (2000) remind us that the role models for both men and women are male, and describe the stress that women in such gender contradictory situations experience [55].

In terms of these cultural expectations Hall (1996) draws on Marshall (1985) in saying that it can be dangerous for women to challenge stereo-types because this makes them "deviants" (p. 61) or outsiders as women, where they may be acceptable as neither women or managers, and thus lose both identities. In her study of headteachers (reported later in this chapter) Hall's (1996) sample became aware of their potential for leadership through their own assessments and the encouragement of others (sometimes, men). She sees the ability of the women to choose their path to headship as a contrast to the demand for a man to become head in order to prove

himself which is an interesting comment, and perhaps contrary to much above, upon the degree to which each can exercise agency. This is in spite of what she calls "informal barriers" (p.62) which these successful women were able to get over by "other socialization processes" (p.62). These heads spoke of the support from their organisations for their advancement, but this may be linked to personality and aspirations because the very things quoted as barriers to progress were seen by these heads as challenges which spurred them on and Hall (1996) had already argued that the dilemmas for women in achieving such positions were "indisputable" (p.46). It may also be that the organisations accepted them as honorary males because they were willing to take on the given male identity and characteristics.

In Chapter Two evidence was presented that while primary and, to a lesser extent secondary education, is dominated by female teachers, there are relatively few female headteachers. In terms of the investigation so far it seems fair to relate this to the issues of history and tradition which have led to headship being characterised as gendered territory. Coleman (2001) gives detailed figures for various countries to show that the trend is not limited to the UK, while accepting that there are regional variations within countries in the overall picture. She links the "complex" causes for this discrepancy to the role of women in society and to "a range of social and cultural attitudes" (p. 76) which, in spite of equal opportunities legislation, put logistical barriers (which grew from psychological ones) in the way of women aspiring towards leadership. While this research focused upon female secondary headteachers and further developed in Coleman (2002) it is a useful inclusion because there has been no specifically primary parallel research on this scale, because it involves male heads in

the research (2002), and because it brings issues identified up to the 1990s in Chapter Three into a twenty first century focus.

4.5 Particular Work-related Issues

"The barriers to the career progression of women that are experienced within the work place are inter-twined with the perception of women in their domestic role, which influences the presumption that women may be ill-fitted for management and leadership. At its most extreme this can lead to overt and covert discrimination against women in relation to their promotion and appointment for more senior roles." (Coleman 2001, p 83.)

While Coleman's study is focused on secondary headteachers' experience the quote above sums up much of the findings of the literature across all phases including higher education. Much of what Coleman reports (in 2001 and 2002) echoes what was presented from the work of Hill and Ragland, and both studies point to a masculine culture and identity. Evetts (1990) argues that political reform of education in the Education Reform Act 1988, has re-asserted those traditional qualities of headship which demand that heads are autocratic, competitive, tough and aggressive - all those qualities associated with the Victorian Headmaster. Coleman argues that this leads to "marginalizing and isolating those women who do become heads and making it more difficult for women who may wish to aspire to promotion and eventual headship"(p.85). This, once again, is echoed across the literature and with respect to those circumstances where a woman enters what has traditionally been considered to be a man's world. Reay and Ball (2000), however, argue that this does not take account of the way in which "the powerful in society, regardless of their sex, share more in common with each other than they share with relatively powerless members

of either sex" (p.150). Hall's (1996) study supports this saying that the "differences between women are potentially as great as between women and men" (p.3).

Coleman (2001) questions some of the apparent findings of the research which suggest that problems associated with sexism affect younger and married heads more than others. She says that this may be that they are more aware of it and less accepting than their older or single counterparts. Perhaps also, some of the perceived issues (reported following interviews with Governors) around appointing women, for example the possibility of maternity leave or lack of commitment because of family issues, are not present when single or older women apply.

An interesting question in the Coleman (2001 and 2002) studies concerned whether the women headteachers had ever felt the need to prove themselves in terms of their worth as headteachers, or in other words to prove that they fitted the given headship identity. There was a massive positive response to this question (2001) - between 60% and 70% according to the category of schools. What is uncertain in this is whether there really had been such a need or whether it was simply a perceived need. The latter would not lessen the impact of the response but it would determine whether the finding belonged as evidence for the expectations of others or whether it was part of the psychological conditioning of the women headteachers themselves. This also relates to those who said that they had to be better qualified and better at their jobs than their male counter-parts, often feeling the need to put in longer hours at work. This, of course, would increase their feelings of guilt at home and all the problems associated with being a working mum. Coleman (2001) presents the alarming fact that her sample included a "relatively large number of divorcees amongst the over

50s" (p.78) and suggests that a further study is needed to investigate the link between this and the tension of the woman headteacher's job.

4.6 Personal Life Issues

In relation to my own study it is important to note that Coleman's (2001) study had very few headteachers (ten out of six hundred and seventy) with children under five years old, though about a half of the sample were mothers. She presents views expressed by the women that being mothers had enabled them to be better headteachers, showing that they saw an interplay between the personal and professional identity; there is no comment as to whether being headteachers enabled them to be better mothers.

The logistical problems associated with juggling childcare, housework and a senior position highlighted in this study support much previous work and it is interesting that these issues dominate women's responses rather than men's. This is further complicated by the guilt expressed by such women who saw these issues as their concern; "even where there is considerable sharing of tasks, however, the responsibility for domestic arrangements is more likely to fall on the woman" (Coleman 2002, p.66). It seems that whether or not headship is inherently male, the women in this study saw domestic duties as inherently female and were allowed to do so by their partners - which suggests that they shared the view.

Other issues raised in this study included the need for women headteachers to change jobs in order to advance partners' careers, and the amount of care needed by elderly relations. This is supported by Evetts (1994) who raised issues about the relationship

perspectives of the pressure on women to interrupt their careers in order to advance partners' careers. While these issues were found to affect both men and women, Coleman (2001) found that the greater impact was on the women and their careers. If these were the women who had 'made it' in career terms, then it would be a useful investigation (beyond the scope of this study) to find out how many women had been prevented from furthering their careers because of such issues.

4.7 Invisible Gender and the Dilemmas of Women Who Achieve Headship

Grace (1995) explores the issue that only one woman in his study, unlike Coleman (2001 and 2002) and Hall (1996), made explicit any aspect of gender, but he argues that it would be wrong to assume that this means that gender is not an issue. He suggests various reasons for this apparent absence of gender as a concern, including that women have become so absorbed into the male dominated culture that they dare not be seen to raise gender as an issue, or that they have accepted the given identity without question [56]. It may be that women who have achieved headship may be afraid to draw attention to aspects which emphasise that they are female and so avoid issues around motherhood, and this will be an interesting enquiry during the fieldwork. It is also useful to refer back to the work of Colinson and Hearne (1996) who argue that there have been too few investigations into masculinity, which has not been given prominence. It may be that gender has come to be associated automatically with being female, and that issues around masculinity, or being male, have been ignored.

4.8 Studies of Women Headteachers

As this study seeks to explore the experience of women as headteachers and mothers, Reay and Ball (2000) remind us that the main source of power for women in society is in the role of mother. This influences the way in which colleagues relate to them, but it also invests them with "symbolic power" in terms of management. I take some time here to focus upon particular published studies of women as headteachers.

4.8 i Hall 1996

Hall (1996) investigated the experiences of six successful women headteachers. The research is a response to needs voiced in Fullan (1991), Grace (1995) and Southworth (1995) that female headship should be investigated, and a concern by the author that for too long women have been characterised as "victims" "banging their heads against glass ceilings", unable to break through into positions of power and leadership (p.1). Here, using the image of dancing on a glass ceiling, Hall (1996) identifies six women who have broken through, who "have made the dance their own", "lead the dance" and "love the dance they lead" (p.1), in other words have changed the headship identity. Hall (1996), critical of those (like Jenkins, 1991) who "marginalize gender" (p.3) in researching educational leadership, failing to realise its "pervasive quality"(p.3), looks at the way women do the job without trying to draw comparisons with men. She sees the gender issue as influencing getting to headship and the way that women headteachers do the job, i.e. headship as a gendered identity.

Hall's (1996) study traced the family and educational experiences of the subjects and found that relationships with parents had been an important influence in defining power and authority, whether positively or negatively. It was also noted that as girls

they had experienced wider ranges of strategies in the use of power and authority than boys.

Hall (1996, p.67) identifies constraints and demands on new heads and argues that gender made already unreasonable expectations of headship yet more complicated. The expectation for a headteacher to be "tough" was addressed by women in the study being "tough on principles, and not on people" (p.84), and being "true to their own beliefs." "Walking the talk" revealed that these heads had "a commitment to the ethical aims of education" (p.135) challenging inequality. Hall concludes that the women studied "use power to empower" (p.162), but if this failed they "reluctantly" change to "a more direct use of power". In drawing conclusions from her study Hall (1996) presents a picture of the women heads in the study as having "a strong inner locus of control" (p.185), a belief that they could not show any "weaknesses" (p.185), and a strong awareness of themselves as women. [Endnote 57 describes an interesting critique on Hall's (1996) study, demonstrating the contested nature of this terrain.]

4.8 ii Coleman 2001 and 2002

With all the evidence about the difficulties in achieving leadership positions, it is useful to ask what it is that enables some women to achieve. Perhaps it is the willingness to break the mould in the first place, but Coleman's (2001) subjects talked of "hard work" (p.90) and, on occasions, a "role model" or "mentor" (p.91). It is interesting that these could be either men or women. Equally important was the feeling expressed by the women that in order to achieve they had to adopt the "prevailing values" (p. 92) which were male orientated and so perpetuated the difficulties for those women still wishing to aspire to such positions. In order to

address this, many of the women spoke about ensuring that they mentored and encouraged other women to achieve - though in fact, as earlier, few women, in practice, are reported doing this. This work, as those others quoted, clearly sets out headship as gendered terrain.

Coleman (2001) found that the juggling of roles and priorities from personal life was a strong theme, and here the way in which they had, or had not, been supported in this influenced the support that they gave to others. Modelling behaviours aimed at creating cultures "characterized by trust, openness, involvement and a sense of self worth" (p.186) was an important priority for the women. Coleman (2002) identifies the "collaborative and participative style of management" (p.107) as being characterised as female. This is identified as "encouraging the empowerment of others" and "an emphasis upon working in teams" (p.107). However, in a list of key words, the women also chose words like "autocratic", while both sexes identified words linked to collaboration.

Gendered headship is very much about interpretation of headship, but because of all the factors discussed above, it could now be said that headship itself is inherently gendered; in spite of Coleman's (2002) findings, female headship is characterised in a particular way, and there is, therefore, a particular shaping process to female headship. While this is to do with historical expectations which have lingered, and social expectations about the roles of men and women, it seems from this study that the headteacher definition has evolved to become a gendered position. At this point it is very difficult to determine whether these conclusions are influenced more by the ways in which headship has been researched, than the facts underpinning the research.

4.8 iii Blackmore 1999

Earlier in this chapter the work of Blackmore and Kenway (1993) was touched upon. This work is echoed in Blackmore (1999) who researched leadership by looking at the "under-representation of women in positions of power and authority" (p. 2), the issue of women in leadership positions, and the way in which women and "feminists in particular" need to be troubled. She argues that the ability for women in leadership "to work for social justice....and gender equity for women... is currently at risk" (p. 5) and that "official texts" see equality in terms of the number of women in leadership positions rather than challenging policies which prevent the emancipation of women. She criticises those who focus on women and leadership, saying that this makes women the problem whereas there is a need to problematize "the concept of leadership itself relative to wider dominant power/gender relations" (p. 6).

Blackmore (1999) traces the historical development of gender as a determinant of power and reminds us that this history is socially engineered by the "technologies of gender" (p.23) which must be unravelled because "to reinstate women's presence in the past provides spaces for women's voices and actions in the present"(p.23), which reshapes and eliminates the given identity. She sees a progression from the "patriarchal masculinism" (page 24) of Victorian times, through the "paternalistic masulinity" (p.27) of the postwar era, to the "strategic masculinism" (p.32) of the latter part of the twentieth century. Much of what is embodied here has parallels with Grace's (1995) historical perspective on headship but she further develops this distinguishing between masculinity (features of male behaviour which can change over time), masculinism (justifying men's domination over women), and patriarchy (the way in which unequal power relations are sustained) (all p.24). In this way,

Grace's identification of headship as masculine does not have sufficient in common with what Blackmore (1999) means by "masculine". Her description "masculine" (p.24) has much greater resonance with what is being presented in the literature surveyed in this chapter about the headship identity and male dominance, and implies a much greater determinism by men to maintain the status quo. She also reminds us that being different is not the issue - only being equal.

Blackmore (1999) sees a distinct female leadership persona and synthesises work from various recent researchers to exemplify this. The characteristics of female leadership that she presents include being more democratic and less dominating, more sensitive and flexible, more cohesive and integrative, valuing trust, compassion and openness (p.57). She is concerned about the generalisation of all of this and the distinction between women and feminists, and argues that in the details of what the women in her study said important directions lay, even though they often tried to ignore things that did not fit what was expected of them - which really underlines the gender issue further. The specific language used to describe experience is "powerful because it can promote the realization of shared understandings" (p.65).

Blackmore (1999) found much greater differences in experience according to age but she, too, makes generalisations about the "superwoman" (p.82) expectations of the woman leader in society who must be strong "in the face of adversity, discrimination, resistance, taunting and teasing" (p.82). All of this means, however, that women are the ones identified as the "new leadership talent, as change agents" because they are not threatened by change as men would be; but Blackmore argues that they are not allowed in such positions to be "full constituted humans", but rather "flat templates of

real life without the flesh, the angst, the emotions, the beliefs that are the make-up of being female, being feminist" (p.83). And all of this, in spite of the growth in Equal Opportunities policies in the 1990s. Hall (1996) reminds us that the woman leading the dance was doing so in sets designed and constructed by others and this echoes Blackmore (1999) who says that the Equal Opportunities policies were often designed in order to satisfy legal requirements rather than humanitarian concerns with real equality. In terms of the conceptual framework of this study, this suggests that the exercise of agency by women in this situation was severely restricted, ensuring that the structures in place were perpetuated.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has sought to develop the conceptual framework of the study by investigating what is known about the female headship identity, whether headship is gendered terrain, and if so whether it is implicitly gendered or constructed as such. It has also sought to identify whether such issues are attributable to the kind of research that has been undertaken in this area. It is clear that much of the research covered sees a definite gender perspective to headship both in the way in which it is accessed and in the way in which it is undertaken. The important exception to this is in the work of Reay and Ball (2000) where important issues are raised which remind us that "gendered identities are in context more fluid and shifting than they are depicted in such texts" (p.145) which tend to essentialise experience.

As I have explored this literature I have presented the view that, because of the historical perspective, what may once have been interpreted by those holding power as inherently gendered, may have become so in the perceptions of most people. This

is about where perceptions and reality, or interpretations and inherent fact become blurred; but it is also about whose interests may be served by this blurring.

Those women headteachers who have undertaken headship in a way which is different to its definition in masculine terms have risked much in terms of their career. There is also the issue that if they are not deemed to be effective using these methods then they will have undermined the female headship identity for the future - and this must take account of the way in which those defining effectiveness will be doing it within the constraints of established perceptions which, if the research presented is accurate, are masculine in nature.

In terms of the conceptual framework for the study this chapter is about what is known about women in headship. From the research presented the women studied identified gender as an issue both in access to headship and in the headship identity. It is also clear that the authors present a belief that the ways in which headship was investigated and presented in the past have influenced this perspective and contributed to 'gendering' the role and shaping the female headship identity.

It is important that these issues underpin the research design for my fieldwork and in Chapter Five I seek to use all that I have found in relation to the initial conceptual framework to ensure that my design takes account of these understandings.

Chapter Five

Research Design

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology and methods used in the fieldwork for this study and to justify their choice. In order to do this there is a need to establish the scope and concerns of the study. In Chapter Two I began to set out the conceptual framework which would underpin the investigation. This outlined issues around identity and the importance of the interplay between agency and structure to support our understanding of the personal and professional. As the study has progressed the conceptual framework has developed to include political agendas around headship, issues to do with motherhood and multiple identities, the way in which female headship is experienced, and the influence of research traditions upon what knowledge is considered to be. I will use this chapter to develop the framework of my fieldwork set in an appropriate methodology taking account of the content of the conceptual framework.

I began my study from the point of what is known in the area of focus with a search of the literature, and I found that, while there was a great deal of work on identity, headship and leadership and the gender profile, there was no work focusing specifically on women who were headteachers and mothers and this was the core concern of my fieldwork.

5.2 Selecting an Appropriate Methodology

The methodological challenge in designing the fieldwork was to ensure that the voices of the subjects would be heard. Underpinning the design of such a study is what is understood in terms of claims about what represents truth and the contribution that such truth makes to theory. For a study investigating experience and emotions relating to identity an ontology which sees reality as coming through human experience is necessary. How people create the sense of self and exercise agency within wider structuring processes fits with an ontology within the qualitative approach [58] that recognises and values the personal experience of the nature of truth. Within such a paradigm, truth for one person may be different to truth in the experience of another, but each has valuable insights and, within a group sharing common experience, trends and patterns may be identified.

5.2 i The Influence of the Feminist Ontology

Further to this, my work has been greatly influenced by the feminist tradition which, while having many varying stances, is built upon an ontology which recognises the shifting and relative nature of truth and seeks emancipation for those who are oppressed within society – particularly women. This leads to a view of knowledge which is in contrast to theory in the positivist sense. For example, Blackmore (1999) draws on Anyon (1994) who attempts to bring local observations to wider social implications in order to identify trends and possibilities for action, but seeks a theory which would help to identify a way for feminist politics to move education forward in this difficult arena of qualitative research and the development of theory. From her research she draws conclusions in which she sees the issue of women being excluded from leadership in education as having much wider implications than simply

restricting opportunities for women, and that putting white, heterosexual, middle class

males in such a position perpetuates the status quo and resists change because they are

a product of the structure that they will therefore seek to maintain. The method

employed by Blackmore (1999) is to review projects undertaken from a feminist

stance. In this she takes a qualitative epistemological stance which can be seen as

developing theory and praxis [59]. Stanley and Wise (1993) are critical of both

feminist and non-feminist failure to make sense of the relationship between research

and theory and this has important implications for my study.

The feminist approach to research has influenced my work because it challenges

attitudes to knowledge production and theory. Weiler's characterisation (1988, p 59)

of feminist research as a rejection of value-free research, emphasising the importance

of everyday life and experience, and establishing a political motivation to bring about

change underlines this challenge. Here longstanding social prejudices are pushed

aside and more open attitudes are developed.

In the section on the method used in my field I explain the use of interview but in this

section I explore how this relates to the feminist ontology and the way in which this

has influenced my use of the method. There are many issues around the use of

interview in qualitative research; Stanley and Wise(1993), concerned about the

possibility of self indulgence in the interview approach, employed various means of

data collection in addition to interview. However, they argued that interview is

dynamic, "an act of collaboration between two people," where each "make(s)

decisions about their presentation of self for their own purposes" (1993, p.42) and this

points to the validity of experience in constituting knowledge (i.e. contributing to

theory). Stanley and Wise (1990) address issues around the differing realities of the researcher and the subject, where the interview in this context values emotion as a research experience and the symmetry in the relationship between the researcher and the subject. They address the management of power structures within these complex issues.

There are many criticisms of feminist research which must be taken into account in my research because the feminist influence is so strong. Measor and Sikes (1992) remind us that overemphasis of "individual freedom at the expense of the needs of the community" is "a very male view of the way people and society work" (page 21). They also note that there are disagreements among the factions of feminism about the place of the individual in society, and about "whether a change in women's work and economic status is enough to change women's position in society" (p.24). They criticise radical feminism for failing to take account of issues around race and for being too simplistic in their understanding of male power. Coleman (2002) also argues that radical feminism has "no consensus on how to move forward" (p.160). In analysing the interviews in my fieldwork and drawing conclusions to bring to theory these cautions must be taken into account in order to protect the position of women and those who research from a woman's point of view [60].

Robson (1993) argues that research needs to be rooted in "the real world" (p.2) rather than in artificial situations and my fieldwork is dealing with real experience. He argues that in this kind of research findings are limited in their application to the specific investigation rather than providing universal truths, and it is true that the findings from my study will describe reality for this particular group of women.

However, Bassey (1999) distinguishes between generalising from such a study and using the trends and patterns identified to relate to those of other studies. Such trends contribute to thinking (i.e. theory) and future research directions.

5.2 ii Contributing to Theory

In Chapter Three the way in which particular provinces of educational research influenced findings was examined through Gunter and Ribbins' (2003) typology and it is important to explore the way in which my findings may contribute to theory and the issues around this. As has been argued above qualitative research deals with perceptions, attitudes and experiences which are located in very specific circumstances. However, although findings can only be related to that particular research, trends and patterns across many such studies contribute to the body of knowledge in a paradigm where it is accepted that what constitutes knowledge changes over time. In contrast to the positivist approach where an initial hypothesis is tested in order to produce a theory, my fieldwork sets out to generate knowledge which is not based upon hypotheses but upon a body of evidence which underpins experience (as set out in the conceptual framework of the study). It is also important to note the value placed within qualitative research upon the distinctive nature of individual experience which may fall outside the identified patterns and trends, and this has particular relevance to my study in ensuring that all voices are heard.

My study, described above as qualitative in nature, is located within the critical province of research where theory is used as a lens through which to focus upon the experience of identity. The conceptual framework which has developed through the study so far is used to structure the enquiry and to make it manageable by giving it a

sharp focus; to build upon work from the social sciences; to create an agenda for future enquiry; and to enable new issues and insights to develop which challenge and extend the original conceptual framework.

5.2 iii The Place of the Researcher in the Research

It was important to locate myself as interviewer within the research and to acknowledge my subjective position in this study. Issues raised by MacLure (1996), are important to note. Having experiences in common with subjects gives access to information within the very complex issues involved but we then have to ask about the boundaries of effectiveness. She raises the issue of the effect of the gender and ethnicity of the researcher, and the extent to which he/she shares the experiences of the subjects which was of particular reference for me. The relationship between the researcher and what is being researched becomes symbiotic but Walker (1980) says that the past experiences of the researcher are a problem because they may mask issues and distort them in that he/she comes with the issues already within a conceptual pattern of importance. There were implications for my study in that I had a framework within which the interviews were to take place. I addressed this by ensuring that the subjects had the opportunity to cover issues that were important to them within, or in addition to, my questions.

The nature of my study demands much subjectivity from the interviewer and the subject in order to get to the core of experience in an equal relationship between peers (and equals), where some of the subjects are known to me. Platt (1981) argues that "this implies reciprocity and symmetry in the relationship" (p.80), in contrast to the general assumption that the interviewer and subject are "anonymous to each other...

that the relationship has no past or future, and the research roles are (or should be) segregated from all other roles" (p.75). I attempted to deal with the issues above by ensuring that the subjects were, as much as possible, in control of the interview provided that we covered the issues outlined. There were no other overt boundaries to their thoughts and opinions within the framework of the investigation. In this way, my past experiences or predilections could not subvert their responses, but as a researcher who understands the minutiae of the context and the relationships which might affect the findings I had valuable insights in order to identify deeper issues within the interview.

5.3 Survey Methodology

Through the fieldwork I want to explore the way in which influences in the lives of the women may have shaped their personal identities and the way in which this interplays with their professional identity. This needed to have regard for the "validity of data generation methods" (Mason 1996, p. 147) in terms of the match between what was being investigated and the methodology and methods used. As I am investigating human experience I have taken of account of Wheatley's (1994) argument that in exploring human interactions the researcher has to recognise that the world is not a machine; it is alive, and even human activities like school leadership are complex living systems. This view of the complexity of such research is supported by Marshall and Rossman (1995):

> "For the social scientist in applied fields, research is a process of trying to gain
> a better understanding of the complexities of human interactions" (p.15).

This quote summarises one if the fundamental aims of my research and establishes the need for methodology and methods which value this complexity and open-ended nature of the experience of the world. It must also take account of the issues that have

been explored in preceding chapters, particularly those concerning the influence of the methods and methodology of research upon the findings. These reasons further support my choice of a methodology within a qualitative ontology influenced by feminist paradigm within this.

The particular methodology which, I believe, is best suited to this enquiry is that of survey. I have chosen this way of structuring my enquiry because there is the opportunity to identify patterns and trends through a breadth of data across a number of women's experiences. Robson's (1993) description and analysis of the various methodological approaches within the qualitative paradigm is important to consider, but I felt that experiments (using control groups and identifying variables to be measured), case study (focusing in depth on one subject with evidence from other people and documents), and action research (designing and observing intervention strategies) gave less opportunity to explore subjective experience.

I set the boundaries within this survey by identifying twenty women who are headteachers and mothers in the North Midlands of England as subjects for the collection of data. This was a purposive sample, defined by Robson (1993, p.141-2) as a sample chosen "through the researcher's judgement as to typicality or interest." They were selected because they fit the required criteria – i.e. they were women who were mothers and headteachers. This will be further developed in the section about the sample.

5.3 i The Sample

As described above, the women chosen for the interviews formed a purposive sample, described in Figure 5.1. The common features across the sample were that they were all women who were headteachers and mothers. Within the sample I had hoped to include a variation across one parent mothers, mothers with family support structures and those without, and mothers with children of differing age, in order to generate a dynamism within the study. Colleagues or 'gatekeepers' made links to find twenty women who met the criteria. This mode of gaining access was quite useful because it meant that I was a trusted friend or colleague of someone known to them and this led to a relationship of trust underpinning the interviews.

Contact tended to be made initially by phone but I sent a letter of introduction (see Appendix 1) to each subject outlining the area of focus and the method to be used. The letter also promised confidentiality and anonymity to protect identity. Generally the subjects, who were under a great deal of pressure from each of their roles, agreed to be interviewed because they felt that the area of focus was of particular value. After each interview I sent the subject a transcript in order that they could check for accuracy. I also allowed them to add anything that they felt was important which had been omitted.

Conducting the interviews was problematic on two levels. Firstly, I was asking subjects to discuss areas of experience which might compromise their professional relationships within schools or the Local Education Authority (LEA), or their personal relationships at home. Secondly, headteachers have their own priorities and an appointment would easily be jeopardised by the myriad of issues needing attention

each day. I felt that it was unfair to ask subjects to give up time outside school hours (though many willingly offered to do so), but meeting in school was fraught with pre-occupations and interruptions. Time just before or just after school or at dinnertime seemed a reasonable request as this meant that I was not taking time from my own school day. None of the interviews were abandoned in spite of the many crises that were on-going while I was present, and there were only two interruptions which suggested that my subjects had seen the interviews as being of great value and had made arrangements not to be disturbed.

One of the subjects was clearly pre-occupied by very pressing issues and the interview was very short but the emphases were, nevertheless, quite clear. The interviews with heads of schools in special measures following OFSTED Inspections were emotionally draining for both the interviewer and the subjects and some of these revealed more details when the interview was over about the full extent of their circumstances at that time.

A consideration of ethical issues is fundamental to all research design and this was particularly problematic in this study. In transcribing the interviews there was a danger that subjects would be identifiable because of some of the biographical information and events in school life provided. It was impossible to present the wider issues involved in the interviews unless I reported the detail and I had to be certain that subjects understood that the transcripts needed to be regarded as public property. None of the subjects showed any concern about this issue though one, whose school had been in special measures, told me much more when the interview was over about some serious issues concerning the attitude of the LEA at that time. This would have

been extremely problematic if it had been part of the interview and she would have been very easy to identify. Generally issues around relationships at home were less problematic, but there were potentially very difficult issues to deal with here. Such ethical issues are summed up as the moral aspect of research and the need to protect subjects by Measor and Sikes (1992). The following table describes the subjects, but names are changed in order to protect identity.

Figure 5.1: Profile of Subjects

Name	Professional profile	Personal profile
Dee	Headteacher of primary school with 400 pupils. First headship. School had been in special measures	Age 35. Married with one child, now in high school.
Cal	Had been acting head at primary school of 150 pupils in special measure. Now head of primary school of 250 pupils.	Age 48. Married with one child, now in high school.
Anita	Headteacher of primary school with 200 pupils.	Age 56. Married with four children, now all over twenty one.
Gill	Headteacher of primary school with 200 pupils about to amalgamate. Second headship.	Age 40. Married with one child born a few months after taking up second headship, now one year old.
Gene	Headteacher of primary school with 400 pupils. First headship.	Age 50. Married with two children, now over twenty one.
Heather	Headteacher of primary school with 150 pupils. First headship.	Age 52. Married with one child, now over twenty one.
Jen	Headteacher of primary school with 250 pupils. First headship.	Age 48. Married with two children, now both over eighteen.
Jade	Headteacher of primary school with 200 pupils. First headship.	Age 47. Married with two children, now over eighteen.
Vera	Headteacher of primary school with 274 pupils. First headship	Age 43. Married with three children, all in high school.
Trisha	Headteacher of primary school with 200 children. First headship. School had been in special measures.	Age 50. Married with two children, now over eighteen.
Patty	Headteacher of primary school with 150 children. First headship.	Age 48. Divorced and new partner. One child, now over eighteen.
Sam	Headteacher of primary school with 400 pupils. Second headship.	Age 45. Married with one child, now over eighteen.
Polly	Headteacher of primary school	Age 52. Divorced. One child, now

	with 300 pupils. First headship.	over eighteen.
Paula	Headteacher of primary school with 300 pupils. Second headship. First school had been in special measures.	Age 46. Married with four children, now all in high school.
June	Headteacher of school with 200 pupils. Second headship. School had been in 'serious weaknesses.'	Age 48. Divorced and remarried. One child, now over eighteen.
Lynda	Headteacher of primary school with 250 pupils. First headship.	Age 43. Married with two children, now aged 11 and 8.
Barb	Headteacher of school with 500plus pupils. Third headship.	Age 48. Married with three children, now over eighteen.
Helen	Headteacher of primary school with 250 pupils.	Age 50. Married with one child, now over twenty one.
Dulce	Headteacher of primary school with 250 pupils. Second headship.	Age 55. Married with two children, now over eighteen.
Tara	Headteacher of primary school with 200 pupils. First headship.	Age 37. Married with two children. First child born a few months after appointment. Now aged three years and one year.

The table shows that the subjects met the criteria, and that there were a variety of professional and personal profiles.

5.4 Semi Structured Interview

Within the survey methodology, which ensures a breadth of enquiry, I have chosen to use semi-structured interview as the method in order to ensure depth to the investigation of the subjects' experience. I designed an interview schedule which would focus upon the way in which headship and motherhood are experienced and which enabled the women to tell their stories. By using the research aims to generate the interview questions I ensured the reliability of the data, and ensuring that the subjects met the criteria through the context of their professional and personal lives brought validity to the research. These aspects were also strengthened in that I sent transcripts of the interviews to the subjects who were invited to read them for

accuracy and to add or amend following reflection. Only one subject made an amendment but it was very minor adding information rather than changing opinion.

I have chosen semi-structured interviews because Oakley (1981) argues that structured interviews involve domination by the interviewer (particularly when the latter is male). I ask particular questions to highlight their experience of the issues under investigation, but generally I intended to allow the conversations to focus upon areas which were felt to be important by the women. In this case the interviews may be called 'conversations' (as in Pascal and Ribbins 1998) because I try to avoid the emergence of a power structure, in order to enable the women's voices to be heard. Pascal and Ribbins' (1998), in their interviews with headteachers found that this method enabled the subjects to become co-researchers with shared ownership of the content. Polkinghorne (1995) argues that these kinds of stories are particularly appropriate in exploring such experience because they express human behaviour; but there are also concerns with the approach. Hatch and Wisneiwski (1995) argue that the relationship between the interviewer and the subject is open to abuse of power; the ownership of the story is in dispute; there is a possibility of harmful emotional and psychological effects for the subject; using the story to represent wider issues can distort truth; questions of scholarship and whether such narrative qualifies as such; the representation of self which is open to distortion and manipulation; the place of theory and analysis within this method.

In attempting to overcome these issues the interviews were devised treating the subjects, who are my peers, as the knowledge producers. Their practice as mothers and headteachers is positioned in accordance with how they see the relationship

between their personal and professional identities. [The Interview Schedule is to be found in Appendix 2.] The first question gave the opportunity to explore the way in which they had arrived in their present roles as headteachers and mothers in a general opening question about their experiences within these roles in order to explore issues around access and barriers to headship, the route taken and mentors during this time. Secondly, the women were asked how they thought that headship is currently defined, by whom and how this compared with their own definitions, in order to locate their perceptions of the headship identity against issues raised within the literature; similar questions about motherhood gave the opportunity to explore their perceptions and experiences of the motherhood identity in the light of issues raised around social engineering and gendering; how efficiency and effectiveness were defined, by whom and whether they felt that there were any alternative models in order to explore the influences in their headship experience; how gender related to these models and what meaning these had for them as mothers and headteachers, in order to further explore the influence of social attitudes and expectations upon their experience of identity; what major issues they identified currently as headteachers, in order to explore the interplay of national agenda and personal experience; what advice they would give to other mothers who might want to become headteachers, in order to explore the impact of their experiences of the interplay of the identities and the concept of dialogic identity; what attitudes they had experienced from members of family or in their professional lives to their dual role, in order to investigate the impact of dialogic identity. Finally they were invited to share any issues that they felt to be important in order to ensure that they had the opportunity to be heard in terms of issues of importance within their experience.

While these questions were prepared I encouraged the subjects to tell their own stories. This allowed them to identity what they believed to be important, though I used prompts if they did not fully cover the issues in focus. I believed that this was a dynamic strategy rather than a power structure of interviewer to interviewee, in that the conversation was in the control of the subject.

In designing the study I have drawn upon work from sources representing the issues outlined so far, and also from researchers representing a feminist epistemology [61]. For example Hall (1996), in her study of six female headteachers, uses semi-structured interview in order to gather their stories though which to explore their experiences. Her aim is to bring about emancipatory praxis and so her work fits into the feminist tradition of the qualitative approach. I will draw upon work within the feminist ontology to inform my work because here the understanding of truth is in terms of its shifting and relative nature. It also aims to change the understanding of the position of women in the world and demands action to address the issues it raises. The feminist research tradition is an umbrella term [62] for many different approaches within an ontology aiming towards emancipatory praxis. Coleman (2002) argues that this can apply equally within the positivist stance [63], but I have chosen a qualitative approach in which I could focus upon feelings, attitudes and experiences.

5.4 i Analysing the Data

The conversations or stories gave biographical evidence which was transcribed and analysed in order to investigate the knowledge claims of the field drawn from the conceptual framework. Mason (1996) says that this may include "comparing", "developing and tracing", "describing", "predicting and theorizing" (pp. 137-8). This

required the integration of theory and empirical work through the analysis on a chart summarising and problematising the responses within the identified issues. When compared to the original research questions it is clear that the issues involved are far more complex than was described in Chapter One. As the conceptual framework of the study has developed and the fieldwork has unfolded, so too has an understanding that within the research questions are multiple layers of issues which must be addressed and these have informed the analysis of themes. These include:

- Describing and comparing features of professional and personal identity common to their roles as headteachers and mothers;

- How subjects interpreted these identities;

- Tracing how they handle competing identities;

- Developing and tracing these understandings in practice;

- Tracing whether there is a sense of agency as headteachers and mothers;

- Developing understanding of the effect of the structures within which they operate;

- Theorising about how they perceived their career positioning;

- Describing the quality of mentoring they had received in their careers;

- Theorising about what challenges or under-valuing of their identities they had encountered;

- Theorising their views on professionalism;

- Comparing how they saw their identities in relation to the transformational leadership agenda;

- Theorising their perceptions of social expectations of gender;

- Theorising about the place gender was perceived to have in the way in which they understood and lived out their identities;

- Within the feminine/masculine binary, how they theorised their professional role and practice.

The chart was used to analyse what each subject said concerning the themes, and then this was further analysed in order to explore the way in which their presentation of their experiences answered the questions identified above. The chart took the form of a matrix with the names of the subjects across the top and the questions listed down the left hand side. This gave a series of squares into which summaries and key words from the subjects' answers were written. This became a massive chart, but it enabled me, at a glance, to see range or similarity in answers. Account was also taken of a vast amount of data which went beyond the range of the questions. This included for example, the effect upon relationships of the interplay of the identities, the effect of problems at school upon the health and well being of the subjects and their families, impact of the interplay of the identities upon the development of others, attitudes to male colleagues. The analysis used the describing, developing and tracing, etc. (Mason 1996) in order to identify trends and patterns which would contribute to theory in the terms understood in qualitative research outlined above.

Issues around the validity of the research concerning "conceptual and ontological clarity, and the success with which you have translated these into a meaningful and relevant epistemology" (Mason 1996, p.146), and the "validity of interpretation" (Mason 1996, p.149) are dealt with in my study by pinpointing the issues rather than just the questions on the matrix and ensuring that they are interpreted against the conceptual framework. This ensures that there is a basis for "interpret[ing] a piece of dialogue" (Mason 1996, p.150), etc. while taking account of my own position.

Further issues around the generalisability of such work are also important to take into account in qualitative research, and Bassey's (1996) concept of "relatability rather than generalisability" (p.20) is particularly pertinent in investigating identity through attitudes, experiences and perceptions. Other subjects may well have had different perceptions but what was gathered from my sample may relate over time to the experiences of others and, as Bassey (1996) argues, it is the way in which others relate to this, rather than direct correlation which is of value.

The reliability of data through the rigour of the methods employed is of concern in any research design and particularly so when there no standard measurements involved (Mason 1996, p.146). I have attempted to ensure the reliability of my work by designing data generation and interpretation methods which are constantly referenced to the conceptual framework. The honesty and accuracy of interpretation can be measured against this and through reference to interview transcripts.

5.5 Summary

The fieldwork was designed in the context that theory has a special, if contested, place in qualitative research. It is contested because positivist/scientific research observes variables and links them with predictive formulae which form theory, whereas qualitative research has findings which can only be validated for the specific concerns of the project. In this chapter I have argued that much research in the arena that would be identified as qualitative does not seek to test theory but rather to highlight the observed phenomena, and this is where my emphasis lies. In my study it is my intention to develop findings which contribute to theory, but in the sense of

understanding the specific women in the particular circumstances of the fieldwork. The place that this work will attempt to claim in theory is that it will gather evidence about the social construction of gendered headship and motherhood in the case of these women.

The chapter has set out the design for my fieldwork which will use survey and semi-structured interview to gather data about the experiences of the twenty women who are headteachers and mothers in the sample. The chapter has analysed the research methodology and method for this work, and I have considered the issues pertinent to research, and accept that many of these are problematic for the type of research that I have chosen; but I have also shown how I expect to deal with the issues involved.

Chapter Six

Data Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of the interviews conducted with twenty women who are headteachers and mothers. The information is analysed against the key issues identified within the study, through the conceptual framework. These are organised into four themes:

6.1i Identity Issues

- Are there identifiable features regarding professional and personal identities which are common across the sample of women who are headteachers and mothers?

- How do the women who are headteachers and mothers show understanding of their identities?

- How do they handle competing identities and how are these shown in their accounts of their practice?

6.1 ii Agency

- How do the women's accounts show a sense of their own agency as headteachers and mothers, and can they show examples in their practice?

- Do the women's accounts have a sense of how their agency is enhanced and shaped by structures, and can they give examples of this in their practice?

6.1 iii Career Issues

- Do the women's accounts show identifiable issues of career positioning in real experience?

- Do the women's accounts show issues regarding mentoring in career paths?

- Do the women's accounts show challenges to their identities (e.g. undervaluing and inequality) and how do they handle this?

- What challenges does the conceptualisation in policy and research of the headteacher as transformational leader have for the identities of women who are headteachers and mothers?

6.1 iv Gender Issues

- How do the changes in the expectations of the job impact and interplay with social expectations of gender?

- What do the women's accounts show about their understanding of the place of gender in how their identities are understood and practised?

6.2 Identity Issues

Each of the women expressed very definite understandings of their identities as headteachers and as mothers.   The following sections investigate the way in which they expressed these identities.

6.2.i The Motherhood Identity

For each of the women motherhood was implicitly about nurturing and explicitly about loving, caring for and protecting their children and ensuring that they developed into fully rounded people. Eight of them were explicit about this, for example:

> "I mean, my aspirations are that any children that I have or was to have should be loved and nurtured, and given everything we felt they needed to become independent, self-sufficient adults.." (Dulce)

> "Unconditional love, really, because no matter what they do, no matter what happens, you still have to be there for them. And I don't mean have to because it's my duty. I just have to be there for them." (Jade)

> "Motherhood is like two arms around everybody.." (Dee)

Others spoke in a way which expressed these qualities implicitly:

> "A mother kind of wants to bring her children up to be independent, happy and successful." (Gene)

It is interesting that even from the early stages of the interviews, these women who possess a great deal of power and responsibility expressed (though sometimes implicitly) the need to have total involvement with and commitment to their child:

> "It's being totally involved in your child…" (Lynda)

For Anita there were aspects of being a role model in terms of aspirations and achieving dreams. Some of the extracts which illustrate this are as follows:

> "My children have always been told that they can do anything they want to do if they want it enough; not to make excuses if they don't achieve it. Don't make excuses about it. You go for it." (Anita)

> "But I wanted something and I wanted it badly. And if you're prepared to put the effort in, you can achieve any dream in the world that you have. It's having the determination to follow the dream." (Anita)

> "Yes. It's [being a mother and a headteacher] given them the drive to become what they are." (Anita)

In Anita's account it is very hard to find the dividing line between being the mother and the headteacher, and this is the case, perhaps less explicitly, for many.

There was a sense of the great responsibility of motherhood and many of the women were under considerable pressure in carrying out the dual role, like Tara and her very lengthy childcare route each morning and evening:

> "I only live seven miles away from school but I do a twenty one mile round robin in the morning to drop them off before coming here." (Tara)

Polly highlighted the pressure she was under:

> "My husband …….. was also a headteacher. So despite the fact that he had the same pressure and the same job, he didn't seem to have the same problems when it came to running a household."

For Sam this pressure led her to take a risk that has continued to haunt her:

> "I can also remember, and I don't think I've shared this with anyone else, taking him to the doctor and he had a chest infection, and the doctor recommended that he should have a couple of days in bed, and I ignored him. I ignored him because I knew that I'd got something on at school that was too important. And the number of times that I thought about that. Gosh that was dreadful." (Sam)

This is echoed by Jade who felt that she had allowed work to overtake her identity as a mother:

> "But the big advice would be, don't forget your own children. I… because of what the place was like when I first came, because of the pressure and what went on, then I learned a hard lesson. ……. When I saw him in his school uniform I just burst into tears because you could have wrapped the belt around him twice, and he was actually anorexic."

For some of the women their own children were keen to point out the way in which the parent identity had been overtaken

> "…but I can remember on more than one occasion my children to both of us, cause my husband's a teacher as well, 'Oh you've given your best to the children. You don't care about us, just those grotty children you teach,' you know that's been a criticism. … Yes that's a point. You've given your absolute best during the day because that's what you're paid to do, and you've got nothing left." (Cal)

Jen summed up much of what was implied by others in that while her job was very

important to her, anyone with a family must always put the children first:

> "I mean if there is something important in their lives I would drop my job
> tomorrow because it doesn't matter how important my job is to me, they're
> first." (Jen)

Anita echoed this:

> "And I'm sorry it might not go down with the LEAs very well, but my
> children come first - my family comes first. I can always get another job. I
> can't get another child, can I? Nobody can replace your children. And even if
> one of your children died, having another child would not replace that child."

Seventeen of the women in the sample gave great emphasis to child care

arrangements which were seen, implicitly, as their responsibility, for example:

> "And I'm very fortunate because I was able to afford a nanny because I don't
> think I could have coped." (Polly)

> "Yes because inevitably the woman is the front-line care organiser. It's as
> simple as that. And it's always been the case. It's very rarely you find it's the
> dad who's the front-line care organiser." (Tara)

Some (Dee, Heather, Lynda, Tara) were happy to call grandmothers and childminders

"second mothers" or 'substitute mothers', and felt that this gave the very best possible

solution to the child care issue. Gill echoes this as she talks of her mother "bringing

[her child] up".

For sixteen of the women time was a huge issue in motherhood and they felt that

quality time was very important for them. They saw the time issue in terms of being

there for the children when they were needed, for events at school, for personal

traumas, for sporting or out of school events, and more generally for putting the tea on

the table and giving attention. For Jade the guilt of her dual role was wrapped up

within the time issue and she felt very strongly that this had led to her child being anorexic. Dee spoke of "anguish" relating to time issues:

> "The anguish knowing that he was in performances at the nursery school, and I couldn't go and see him. I know that it sounds awful but there was a time that the unions brought us out on strike. And we were on strike one day at lunchtime and the performance that my son was in was in the afternoon. And I thought that it was the most wonderful opportunity that I had to actually get there to see him." (Dee)

Many of the women developed this by saying that it was essential to keep some quality time for the family:

> "I suppose I wish I could have more time. That's what it is. It isn't that I regret what I'm doing, or would do something else, just that I wish it didn't take up so much time." (Dulce)

> "I wasn't going to give up my career that I'd dedicated a lot of my time to my career before, but I was going to have that quality time with my child." (Sam)

> "I hate to say 'quality time' but I'd say try and spend one day a week, either Saturday or Sunday when you do no work at all, where you're available for the family all day." (Lynda)

Gene and Dulce spoke of the need in motherhood to develop independence in children; and the latter states:

> "[children] given everything we felt they needed to become independent, self sufficient adults." (Dulce)

This was also an implicit aspect of what others said. Helen, for example, said that she wanted to be "the wind under their wings", and Anita's comments earlier about teaching her children that they could achieve whatever they wanted to supports this.

Anita summed up much of what was implicit in other accounts by saying that as a mother she rejected much of what is the present emphasis in education on testing and labeling children, because her children developed skills and talents which were not

part of the testing process and this tended to give them an independence and motivation towards achievement at later stages.

She expressed a belief as a mother that much of current educational legislation is actually damaging to children's development, but felt that because of her experience in education she was able to take a more balanced view of her children's achievements:

> "It comes down to the way they've been brought up and the goals and the sights that the parents have set for them, and what the parents actually believe their child can do."

June emphasised that, as a mother who was in a high position in education, she did not have an expectation that her daughter should be academic, while the latter had believed that she did:

> "I think her view of me is that I expected her to be academic, and I didn't. I really didn't."

Dulce also expressed her determination that as a mother she had kept the two roles quite separate, wanting to be just a mother at home, and had never put pressure on the children to achieve academically:

> "Then I could be the head in the daytime, but when I went back home I was the mother immediately. I never, well I hope I never, mixed up the two. I never tried to put pressure on my children as far as their education went. I never taught them to read before they went to school. I just encouraged them in language and stories and experience."

At the same time, however, these women saw practical activities with their children at the pre-school stage or at weekends as they are growing up as an important aspect of mothering, for example:

> "We do make dens between the chairs in the lounge and camp out in cardboard boxes and God knows .... We do all that kind of stuff." (Tara)

Vera introduces an interesting and wider perspective as she talks of motherhood as providing "connection" for the family and says that this was brought into sharp focus for her when her parents died and she felt that she had lost that connection:

> "… after the funeral I was walking to get my lift. I felt so alone. I can't describe properly how that loneliness felt. That's motherhood; it's that connection." (Vera)

Lynda echoes this in a slightly different way as talks of her thoughts all day at school being with her children and worrying about whether they were all right, and as heightened sense of danger. At night she would be afraid to have a drink in case the children needed her:

> "And yet I would always be one ear, half awake, and up at the slightest
>
> sound."

Many of the women talked about their need to have a career as a pre-requisite for their own mental health and therefore to being able to give their best as mothers, for example:

> "But, no, I love my job. But I love my children as well. But I actually know that by having the job, I'm a better mum. I'm not one of these stay-at-home mums. Now that doesn't work for everybody, but I know that for having my job and done what I've done, I hope, despite the hiccup we had, I'm far more interesting as a mum to them, as a person to them than someone who hadn't." (Jade)

> "So in a way I had a bit of a cop-out, cause I felt that I needed to work and I don't think I would have been happy staying at home…"(Gill)

In this section the focus has been on the understanding the subjects have of their identities as mothers. This is clearly in all cases an identity of the utmost importance. There is a sense of the special and unique relationship that the women as mothers have with their children which makes the nomination of "substitute" or "second"

mothers seem out of place. Where these accounts are re-read this concession seems to come from an almost desperate desire that the child should experience mother-type love at all times even if it has to come from someone other than the actual mother for part of the time. The words "substitute" or "second" also emphasise the position of the subjects as the 'actual', 'real' or 'first' mother.

The words that many of the women (e.g. Dee, Anita, Jade, Sam, Lynda, Helen) use about the relationship are strong, passionate and emotive and their feelings about their children are expressed in a way that suggests that the children are the most important aspects of their lives. What is also clear in this section is that many of these women as mothers are strong figures, often motivating or driving forces, with an intention that their children will develop the agency that they (the mothers) clearly exhibit. Even those who express their motherhood identity in less passionate terms (e.g. June, Barb, Polly Gene), nevertheless have very clear expectations that this identity is paramount.

6.2ii The Headteacher Identity

From what was said about the all-consuming nature of the motherhood identity in the last section it is surprising that these particular women felt able to express themselves through another identity at the same time as being mothers. There were clear perceptions of the headteacher identity from each of the subjects, and there were many elements which were common across the identities.

Many summed up a basic and simplified view of the headteacher identity and purpose free from official definitions or expectations, for example:

"Well, ensuring that the children get a good education and that we prepare them for life." (Gene)

"You've really got to know all your staff well, and their strengths and weaknesses." (Dee)

"Looking at relationships as well, being able to be approachable, your effect really on the whole school is from your relationships with staff and children. And yes you've got to be that authority figure both to staff and children but you've still got to be the human being side as well," (Heather).

"It's about managing day-to-day, and it's about having vision, so it's about leadership as well as management. And it's very exciting because you come into work in the morning, you really don't know what's going to happen. Now one angle of that is that it's frightening." (June)

Jade's understanding of the headteacher identity is probably the widest ranging:

"You've got to be everything to everybody. ...... So you've got to be an accountant. ... You've got to be a window dresser .... You've got to be a mum to some of your staff, a sister to some of your staff ...... you're counseling parents, you're counseling children. ... Oh and first aid as well ... two weeks ago I had a lady lying on this floor having a threatened miss-carriage." (Jade)

Much of this basic understanding focused on developing others but in a much broader way than the Government's performance management agenda would imply, for example:

"I think it's about empowerment. I think a successful head empowers and encourages the rest of the staff to lead as well as to be classteachers." (Vera)

"All the delicate issues, and the ethos of the school, how delicate that is and how difficult the balance, and how everything you say and everything you do can change it without realising it." (Lynda)

For Jen there was a particular delight that this had begun to cross cultural barriers in reaching out to Asian mothers at the school,

"we certainly have more Asian women in school now than we ever had before, one or two of whom are now taking College in the Community courses. .... I'm absolutely excited about it because it's a real change, it's a sea change for us, so I'm delighted." (Jen)

Dulce describes the way in which the headship identity has changed during the time that she has been a headteacher from this simple understanding:

> "When I took the job on, headship was the leadership of the school, making sure that it ran efficiently, that people did what they were supposed to, you defined other people's jobs, you were there at the front line if there were any problems.", to "But I think in more recent times, it's become very much tied up with performance of everybody - performance. … and yet layered on top of that are these measurable aspects of management."

Sam echoed this view:

> "If I knew what the job entailed I would never have gone for it; or how the job has changed, because I've seen and you can see from the way I operate the title head**teacher** [Sam's emphasis] - that bit is very important - that I can lead by example. … Now I feel that I'm becoming more removed."

There was much frustration at the proliferation of bureaucracy in recent years which was seen as removing the head from the daily involvement with the school, for example:

> "But I feel that I'm becoming more office bound and I'm not with the children as much." (Anita)

> "The leadership bit's got sidetracked. And we're supposed to be really happy to be having all this financial stuff devolved to us." (Sam)

> "I mean there's an awful lot of what we do is basically glorified administration." (Tara)

> "If I don't do the paperwork, I don't do the paperwork. If they ask me six times, they can ask me for it six times. It's not the priority for me," (Polly).

Lynda talks about the effect of the NPQH upon the expectation of the headship identity. She had clearly felt that the course had prepared her for headship and that she knew how to 'do' headship:

> "Well I did the NPQH so I know what it's about. … the global vision you know, that you could change the world. You know, that it was this great leadership, and that you could inspire others with your vision and lead them forward to this wonderful land."

She finds in practice that this is not the full story:

> "Some of the activities that we did, the role play and all the different things that we did, in the first six months of the job, they weren't relevant at all, because I hadn't quite realised how difficult the whole thing is. How difficult it is to move anything on. How difficult it is to change people's views."

This view of the complexity of headship summarised a great deal of what was said or implied by others about the multi-faceted nature of the headship identity, and how difficult it was to sum it up.

There was a recognition of the imposed school leadership agenda around assessment, planning, target-setting and structure (summed up by Gene, Vera, Sam, Barb, Helen, Dulce), which impacts upon headteacher identity, but the present Government obsession with these was seen as unhelpful:

> "We are the people who are accountable, and they see us as being responsible for hitting targets and producing results and hitting their targets. That's very much how we see our role. That's how we're judged by the ...... They don't come to see how well we make progress with individual special needs children." (Barb)

> "I think the Government use that as a means of justifying the amount of money they spend .... It's measurable and they can say to society, 'Look, we've ploughed all this money into schools and children are doing better in exams.'" (Gene)

> ".. and one school's had to work really hard to get those results, and another school, if the children hadn't attended fifty per cent of the time they would still have got those results. And that's what League Tables don't show." (Dulce)

So, in expressing their identities as heads there was a clear rejection of League Tables as a measurement of performance, and many other concerns regarding contemporary Government pre-occupations expressed, for example:

> "They just look at figures and comparing us with other schools," (Barb)

and Polly, Lynda and Dulce talk of the detrimental effect upon education of the League Tables, and the need to focus on progress made:

"The danger is if there is too much emphasis on the Government agenda and the SATs, is that we've actually done them a grave dis-service and actually turned them off, because we've pressurised and made it the most important thing, because the Government says it is." (Polly)

Within these discussions there is obvious emphasis on the need for a broader understanding of curriculum and achievement within the identity of the headteacher and in the broader education community. It was also clear that there was a concern that leadership, in terms of modeling, coaching, and making decisions based on judgement of the particular circumstances of the school at the time, was under threat because of the externally pre-set agenda.

Dee presents a slightly different view of the Government agenda in that she had concerns about staff who wanted to justify the school's poor position in the League Tables rather than using it as a challenge to address poor performance:

"And even when there's predictions that have come out from the LEA, from the PIPs, staff have said, 'Well they're not like our children.' Even though those tests are compared with the national average, they've said, 'Ooh our children won't do that. These are not right. We can't go from this.'"

From all of this we can see that half the women saw headship implicitly as leadership, but very much in terms of developing a vision, being role models, empowering and developing others including parents. Dee described the role as 'management', Gene doesn't use a label, and Jen, Anita and Helen used the term 'facilitator', but all of these were talking about the same qualities and activities. Cal uses the term leadership as a term to encapsulate all of the activities relating to headship and sees this as much more intuitive and responsive than management. While there was much

in common in these accounts with what was seen as the Government agenda (Chapter Three) they expressed the need for the head to address issues relevant to the school rather than those dictated from outside. The bureaucratic administrative role seemed to be getting in the way of what was considered to be really important - the relationship perspective, the building of self esteem and an emphasis upon a much broader curriculum than the present narrow focus on literacy and numeracy. Barb expressed the view that the size of her school led her towards a role as administrator, in a more bureaucratic/ managerial sense but she felt a determination to be the one who ensured the very best for the children.

It was clear that those headteachers in schools categorised by OFSTED as in serious weaknesses or needing special measures (Cal, Dee, Anita, Gill, Trisha, Paula) had particular emphases to their headship identity where crisis management which got in the way of broader development had to be managed effectively or the school couldn't move on, for example:

> "But by the time you'd had problem after problem, and staff crying, threatening to leave, long term sickness absence, hostile parents, just anything that you could think might happen, happened. The week I took over the school we had a child die from meningitis. So it was a crisis in the deepest sense of the word." (Cal)

> " 'You are way back here but in two years you'd better get way ahead.' So that pressure, the time pressure on everyone and the difficulty of having to smile and bouy everyone else up, even though inside it was very difficult." (Paula)

These heads spoke of headship as being extremely stressful and lonely and of the situation having an extreme effect upon their identity. It is also noticeable that the accounts of these women are similar in tone and use similar language around loneliness, the draining experience, and the effect upon the family, for example:

> ".. it absolutely drains you, emotionally. ….. But the emotional drain, for instance, of putting someone in informal competence procedures. … I'd got nobody to help me. I'd got nobody I could talk to. [he/she] went into the staffroom, crying, telling the staff how awful I was. And I had many sleepless nights thinking, 'Am I doing the right thing here?' you know, 'I'm probably ruining this person's life.' (Trisha)

The effect of this was felt throughout the whole family:

> "I don't think my husband will ever forget it, or my son, because he was still at home at this point and, yes, I would be stressed out and working very hard because there were so many things that weren't in place." (Trisha)

> "And it had absolutely drained the resources that I might have had …. But that actually in the school it just absolutely drained every resource, every bit of cheerfulness that you might have." (Cal)

The sense of isolation and lone-ness of the headteacher was particularly evident in the accounts given by this group but there was also the issue of questioning their own competence or coping resources, as in:

> "I felt that everyone was looking at me as if, 'Ooh you're no good as a headteacher… and I really felt that I couldn't hold my head up when I went into meetings, when you're so upset and isolated, and totally unsupported by the LEA at that point." (Dee)

> "And it was my husband who saw the tears, who saw the upset. It was my girls who saw me ready to give up." (Paula)

> "And I actually think that I lost a couple of years of my life when I look back." (Paula)

It is interesting that these women express the same sense of special-ness and uniqueness about their identity as headteachers in such circumstances as were expressed about the motherhood identity. They accept total responsibility and accountability for their schools' performance:

> "… and to be held up in the local paper as a school where children don't behave, where children are running riot, where the press reports things that are totally not true, then that's actually quite devastating for the whole community. But because you are the headteacher, you are the person responsible and accountable for this." (Paula)

The situation for Gill was slightly different in that she was appointed to the school which was already in special measures and there is a very different emphasis to her identity with none of the perceived guilt:

> "Therefore I approached the LEA with a view to doing something more challenging.... So all at once I found myself the headteacher of a school in special measures .... All very exciting things for us..." (Gill)

June's school had been put into the under-achieving category. It is interesting that her account is very positive and spells out little of the depression and real difficulty that those who had known her at that time, knew that she had experienced. It may be that this was because the LEA had been aware of the very difficult situation that she had inherited as a head and therefore she was absolved of the responsibility while experiencing the emotional difficulties at the time. In her answers there is little evidence of the grief of that time, but plenty of plans for the future:

> "... I know that the Governors are behind me. And the fog has cleared. There are four people retiring this year. In September I'm going to be able to recruit one person to the senior management team and one person to lower down the school. And I feel that it's really my school now and.... It's really mine."

These heads in difficult circumstances all talked about the need as a headteacher to change staff - either by changing attitudes and bringing about improvement in performance or by helping staff to move on, and this became part of their identity. This version of the Government's performance management agenda highlighted the crucial nature of these changes for a school in difficulty which made them necessarily urgent and therefore added further stress, for example:

> ".. but it has been, I have to say, partly because of the change in personnel. There was, I feel, a problem with staff expectations, which has now disappeared. It's gone" (June)

> "And it was as if I was speaking a different language. I don't think they understood at all. ...... 'Ooh, nobody's told us before that we aren't any good.' And everything I said was taken as a real criticism." (Trisha)

It was interesting that few views were expressed about the OFSTED Inspection process; they were more concerned about dealing with inspection findings effectively. As in the discussions outlined above this was about developing staff to ensure that the children got the very best chances in education. There were only passing references to the financial management aspect of the job which was seen as just another task to be undertaken as part of the effectiveness brief. None of the women gave more than a passing mention to this aspect of their role, and no-one considered the marketing aspect at all - except Sam, very briefly, who said that men were better at this bit.

This section has analysed the subjects' understanding of their headteacher identity. It is interesting that those who expressed their understanding of their motherhood identity in strong and passionate terms tended to display similar passion here, though this is particularly noticeable in some of the accounts of the women in schools in special measures. There is a desperate need to be accepted as successful and effective in this identity particularly from their peers. There is an interplay, or even a tension, here between the headteacher identity they have and the one they want. Further discussion could have tried to uncover whether the desired identity was one that they had created in their imagination because of social pressure. For some of these it was the failing school label that gave focus and impetus to the passion, but for others it was a determination to ensure that all children had access to the very best opportunities and provision. As described earlier, leadership was a very important aspect of this, but had a much broader meaning than being confined to the leadership of the headteacher.

6.2iii The Experience of Multiple Identities

There was clear evidence of the impact and interplay of the motherhood identity and the headteacher identity and, as noted above, a blurring of the identity boundaries. This was a clear example of Holland and Lave's (2000) understanding of Holquist's (1990) "dialogic identity" (p.9). Jen, for example, sums up the headship identity as matriarchal and "an octopus of a role" (which she defines as needing lots of different perspectives).

A key theme across the interviews was the importance of working with parents and the community, and for some being a woman and a mother (the dual identity) had a particular impact on this, for example:

> "When I first had dealings with parents the ethnic minority parents particularly found it quite interesting . But again you can turn anything into a positive, and we've actually started to rattle cages of women to say, 'You know, you can do this.' (Sam)

> "I see mums who've come to our parents' courses that we've started, who've got no confidence in themselves at all. ..... and they come to me and say, 'Thank you so much for believing in me.'"(Anita),

> "But I do think parents are looking for someone they can trust and look up to." (Heather)

Trisha shows the importance of these links as she talks about using a home-school link worker to make contact with parents who find school daunting because of their own childhood experiences.

For Polly, being a single parent adds a particular dimension to her identity:

> "It's very hard, and some single mums use the fact that they are single as a reason and an excuse for not doing certain things ... And working mums will come and tell me, 'Well, it was because I was working that I couldn't...' And I say, 'Stop there, because I'm a working mum,' you know. On the other hand, I do say to parents .... I sometimes say, 'I do understand what you're

saying because I'm a working mum. I've been there; I've done it; I've got the tee-shirt.'"

Anita and Barb add that headteachers who were mothers had greater empathy with female staff who had problems with their children:

"They feel that if they have a problem at home, they don't have to ring up and lie to me .... because they know I'll support them." (Anita)

Tara, however, believed that her experiences as a mother made her "harsher" in such dealings because she felt that others should be expected to make the same efforts as she had to make. Curiously, Barb followed her first comment about her sympathy for others by echoing Tara's view:

"Sometimes it makes me more unsympathetic because sometimes I think, ' If it was me I wouldn't have done that. I would have sorted it out; got the childcare; got the childminder.'" (Barb)

Many of the women believed that others' perceptions of their identity was influenced by the fact that they were mothers. For Gill, who had been warned following the death of a teacher from meningitis that the parents would not risk sending their children to school, this worked in a very positive way:

"Asian families are very family-orientated .... And I feel sure that because I had got a child ... they thought, 'Well if [she] is in school it's OK for our children to be in school.'" (Gill)

Jade summarised the view of many in a more general way that being a mother gave a shared identity which caused the parents to trust her:

For some of the women the mother and headteacher identities were complementary and contributed to the blurring of the lines of definition in spite of the tensions of time and conflicting demands, for example:

> "There are standards you expect for your own child that you constantly look for in other children." (Helen)

> " if you're looking at it from a global point of view you're sort of the matriarch and you want everybody to be in your school family and to enjoy being there." (Jen)

And Lynda believed that her dual identities brought credibility with the community:

> "I think it gives you some credibility with parents and also with other staff who've got children ... " (Lynda)

As presented earlier, many of the women described the conflicting demands of headship and motherhood, and many saw these in terms of time issues. Gene did not talk of these tensions. Heather talked of "fitting the job around the family" and she, Jen and Gene agreed that they would have found the role of headteacher very difficult if they had had younger children. Dee talked about divided loyalties and she and Lynda spoke of feeling "torn" between the job and the children.

Competing demands were also addressed by involving their children in school activities. This is seen when Trisha talks of her family going to school with her to remove all the cellotape from the windows, and when Jen talks of the family being involved in fund-raising activities at school. One of the most striking common features of the answers about dealing with the competing demands of the identities for the heads with young children was the supportive husbands and/or extended families, for example:

> "You have to know that there are back-up systems at home." (Helen)

> "And I think I was lucky that I'd got a supportive family, a very supportive husband.." (Dee)

For Tara and Polly there were no grandparents waiting in the wings and so for them:

".. what is fundamental is blooming good childcare." (Tara)

Vera points out that dealing with children who are teenagers and young adults has its own responsibilities which may be different, but nevertheless demanding emotionally:

"...... because they are young adults and thinking, you need to show in some way your relationship with them, and that relationship is developing and changing as well."

While earlier discussions highlighted the need in the subjects that each identity under scrutiny should be paramount, drawing the data together shows that the women felt that the headteacher/mother identities had to be balanced, so that the family ultimately always took precedence. They felt able to give full attention to their headteacher role because childcare had been dealt with. In many cases, however, there was a core responsibility and relationship with the children that was theirs and theirs alone. This is quite difficult to sum up in words but in the accounts of Dee, Anita, Gill, Jade, Vera, Sam, Polly, Lynda and Dulce there is a fierce protection of some central aspect of motherhood which, although they may share at times, they will not finally delegate to anyone else. Perhaps it is Vera's concept of "connection" that encapsulates this, or perhaps it is an indefinable quality which some of the mothers seem to experience as if it was theirs alone.

It is clear that for most the identities are competing. For those whose children were more independent when they became heads, the issues are perceived as less intrusive and less of a threat to the very special motherhood identity. Some are keen to show how they wove the identities together in a way that prevented conflict between them, by involving their children in the life of the school - thereby fusing the two identities.

6.3 Identities In Practice

In many ways the women's sense of agency as headteachers and mothers was experienced in similar ways. The desire and drive for the very best for their own children and their children at school was an example of this. Anita expressed this in terms of them achieving their dreams (as above), but many expressed their agency in the way that they manipulated the Government agenda in order to satisfy their own values at school, and controlled child care at home, for example:

> "In my terms, I suppose it's [motherhood] a bit like headship because it's doing your very best for an individual child." (Barb)

> "Perhaps in the Government's terms it's it [effectiveness] could be raising standards, though I'd be loathe to say that was the only measure... But it's about being able to make a difference, especially to the lives of individual children in your school, and also the working practices of the staff, which in turn impacts on the individual children." (Barb)

> "Motherhood is like two arms around everybody, and I continue that at school, it's like a bigger family here." (Dee)

> "You have to do the best you can with what you've got, and I don't think that it necessarily makes you a better head to stay hours and hours on the job. I think sometimes it makes you very tired and ineffective." (Gill)

Within two weeks of coming out of special measures, Gill's school found that it was to be closed as part of an amalgamation:

> "I was an enemy to one set of parents because they thought I wasn't supporting them, and an enemy to the parents here because they felt I wasn't supporting them." (Gill)

Gene illustrates the way in which being a headteacher increased her sense of agency in both identities in a complementary manner:

> "I think perhaps being a head has made it [being a working mum] easier because I'm working to my own agenda rather than someone else's, so I know what the priorities are. ... So I think being a head and a mother to a large

extent is easier than being a working mum under somebody else, and a mother." (Gene)

But Jade sets this in context by illustrating how her agency is limited:

> "But other times you've just got three urgent ones [priorities] and there's nothing you can do is there. You've just got to deal with it and that's it. I suppose the answer is, you do it standing on your head and, you know running backwards really." (Jade)

An interesting profile in many of the women's accounts is that of trying to increase or develop the agency of others:

> "But what I'm trying to achieve is a community thing. I'm trying to help people here realise they are good; they are worth something. They are worth as much as the people in the posh area," (June)

This is echoed in the accounts of Anita, Sam and Jen who worked in differing circumstances, to offer parents the opportunity to develop new directions and to take greater control of their lives so that these opportunities can then be more meaningful to their children:

> "Because we've helped them to see that there's another world out there and if they [parents] work with us we can help get them there. I see us as a more rounded school. I think the Government's definition of a good school is very narrow. Providing a breakfast club or an after school club is not necessarily going to make a rounded child." (Jen)

The mother identity is particularly strong when the subjects are dealing with issues that have an impact upon parents in the school, for example:

> "Sometimes I can feel myself getting, not tearful, but emotional when parents are getting very upset." (Lynda)

Perhaps this experience reminds the women headteachers of the way in which they are all subject to the structures within which they operate:

> "I mean the role of head is one of leading the school, but I think that in order for that to happen effectively you've got to make people want to follow where you lead, like everything else, and building up a relationship where people will want to follow where you lead, and will want to go down the route that you're planning." (Patty)

"And I find that when I know that I've got to do this management paperwork bit ... The only way I'm made to do it is my secretary, and she pulls me in, literally, ... because I get distracted and excited, and I've told her that she needs to do it." (Sam)

In this way the subjects acknowledge that the demands of the structures around them limit their agency in the headship identity, and they each find different ways of reclaiming this ground in the motherhood identity:

"And then twice a year I have what I call a mummy's day out when I go to the hydro, where I can slob about and nobody knows me, and you know, it's just a crash out day." (Tara)

This is also evident in the headship identity:

"The environment of the school was as it had been built. It didn't seem to have been improved at all, so it wasn't a pleasant place to be in really or to work in. So I felt, well this is something I can do without the support of the staff ... and they [family] would come in at the weekend to sort out all these bookcases and things." (Trisha)

If we take an overview of all the data so far there is great confusion about the extent to which the women operate as agents in either identity. Each of them is keen to show that they manipulate the structures within each of the identities but there is great tension here because so often they develop their accounts by talking of the way in which this agency is limited, whether by the attitudes to change of colleagues at school, or by the way in which they miss important events for their children. It is clear that by retaining the responsibility for childcare arrangements and by guarding the special or unique character of their relationships with their children, it is here that they defiantly guard and preserve their agency and control.

It is of note that there is little data within the interviews about the subjects' identities as partners or wives, or about their relationships with their partners. There is much

that points to the supportive attitudes of partners and families (as with Cal, Jen, Tara, Helen, Barb, etc.); and in some cases a definite view that the woman's career changes her identity within the family (as with Anita, Jen, Polly, Heather, etc.). It is fair to say that the interviews did not focus upon this area, but it is interesting that it was not felt to be of such a high profile that it would attract more coverage. It could be that this serves to emphasise the importance of the identities as mothers and headteachers but, as this is the area of focus, this needs to be treated with care.

6.4 Leadership Issues

Generally the women expressed their identity as headteachers in terms of leadership which encompassed uniting everyone in a vision, developing others and empowering others.

This is encapsulated by Helen:

> "I believe it's my job to have the vision, and there are times when it's a shared vision with my deputy. But there times when it's my vision and I will keep it and they will have to come with me. But in the main my leadership role as headteacher is to ensure that the whole structure of our school is able to pull together and that we all share the same aims, the same values, and the same philosophy about what primary education is about." (Helen),

But there are many perspectives which support this view, for example:

> "In some respects people might see you as an administrator and a manager and less as a lead teacher. I mean, ideally that's how people ought to see you - as the leading teacher." (Barb)

> "Really to lead and to know what's needed and to get underneath the surface of school life and to know what skills your staff have, and to really understand the roles - where do they need developing, where do they need directional advice." (Cal)

Dulce explores the impact of this leadership upon others, and the response to it within the organisation:

"To be effective people have got to be absolutely committed to where you're trying to get them to be ....Is the vision that you have yours and yours alone? Or is it a joint vision of the staff? ... An effective head will get them there." (Dulce)

Others, for example Jen and Lynda, express the view that leadership is shared in order to make it relevant:

"But I think people expect me to say, 'This is what you should do, we're going to do it this way.' And I think they look to you to solve the problems of the world sometimes when it's much better if we work through the answers..." (Jen)

"You know that it was this great leadership, that you could inspire others with your vision .... how difficult it is to get other people to even see what your vision is, and to share it is a long way down the road, really." (Lynda)

And Sam, Tara and Trisha, in different ways, broaden this to encompass the daily practicalities which sums up as 'management' saying that this profile is now threatening to take over in headship:

"Well it's a real management thing. The leadership bit's got sidetracked..... It's managing different aspects. It's the management of people thing which you could link to the leadership side, I agree. But in terms of that it's making square pegs fit round holes. The budget's got to fit. The staffing structure's got to fit the budget. You've got to have the vision, and also the where withall to fund the vision." (Sam)

Vera, however, staunchly defends the leadership agenda:

"If we're going to make schools into places of learning for everybody, then I think you've got to cultivate that kind of culture, where people feel secure to learn. That means people will move on because you're actually developing people..." (Vera)

This section displays the way in which so much of the debate about leadership is a tension between what is rooted in traditional headship experiences, a desire to take hold of a professional development agenda, and the demands of externally determined structures. From what is rooted in history there is little of the Victorian 'Headmaster' and social engineer (described by Grace, 1995) displayed here, but there is a sense of the 'lone-ness' and singular nature of the role, and a desire among parents for some of

the Victorian traits to linger. The professional development agenda, which is almost universally regarded by the subjects as the true nature of leadership, is constantly being squeezed out by tasks of lesser importance but which are often crucial to the running of the school.

6.5 Career Issues

In terms of the attitudes of colleagues to women who were headteachers and mothers, most of the women felt that this had not been an issue, and had even brought admiration from others as in:

> ".. I mean some people say things like, 'I don't know how you manage. How do you manage it?'" (Vera)

> "No, I've never, ever felt that people thought I couldn't do the job because I was a mother. ... And I think they admire anybody who can actually have four children, who can reach headship" (Paula)

June adds a different dimension to the debate as she recounts an incident from the past which does not question her ability, but rather her need to pursue her career:

> "I can remember in my second year of teaching, a man in the school saying to me, 'Well yours is a really good salary for a second income, isn't it?' And I went for the jugular. I don't think I would now, but I haven't encountered that kind of attitude, ..." (June)

And Helen and Cal see the issue much more in terms of the personality profile of the woman in the job:

> "No, no. But I think that's to do with you as a person. I don't think it's to do with your roles as a mother or wife or whatever. I think if you've demonstrated as a colleague that you commit yourself to the job, not that you're putting family second, necessarily, but that you have a commitment and professionalism, that is going to ensure that the job is done - whatever the job is. .... " (Helen)

But Dulce reminds us of her experiences from the past:

> "Certainly never from peers. ...... But apart from losing the odd job, as you do, no, I haven't been aware of it."(Dulce)

Dulce also expressed concern over attitudes to her as a woman wanting a career prior to headship. She gives examples of courses being directed at male staff, and statistics regarding gender in headship, and an expectation among Governors that a man would be appointed to a headship:

> "I was told after interview that, 'In keeping with the traditions of the school, Mr. ... is going to be appointed.' Now I wasn't quite sure what the traditions of the school were, but I suspected that they'd always had a headmaster, and that's what they were going to continue to have." (Dulce)

While Dee felt that there were no particular attitudes to her as a headteacher who was a mother, she nevertheless felt that when the school went into serious weaknesses her predecessor as a male headteacher of a certain age would have had more sympathy from colleague headteachers:

> "I know even in our own partnership we've got a school in a slightly better area, and the head there has got no understanding at all of what we go through here because it's completely different." (Dee)

Anita echoed this view.

Much of Sam's experience was to do with being a woman rather than a mother:

> "I was patronised, I think because of my gender, but also because I was only about thirty three. It wasn't expected that I'd have a voice, that I'd just sit and nod. And their initial reaction was, 'She'll be an easy picking.'" (Sam)

Dulce, however, found a definite attitude among Governors to appointing a woman with young children as headteacher (see quote in earlier section), and Tara knew that she was under scrutiny:

> "And then it was a watching brief with the Governors to check that I was doing everything that I was doing before [having children]." (Tara)

In this section the data shows that there are some perceived issues about the women having careers in headship, but these subjects linked this with gender in general rather

than motherhood specifically, and felt that this has become much less of an issue recently. The historical issues around Governors not appointing women with young children to headship, or male colleagues' attitudes appear to be less prominent now than when Dulce was appointed, but it is unclear in the accounts whether this is real or perceived. Even in Gill's account, who became pregnant soon after being appointed to headship, this is difficult to assess because she was already in post. This is also true of Tara, though she expresses the need to prove that she can combine the two roles.

Few of the women describe those who mentored them on their way to headship, and their achievements appear to be largely self-motivated (with the support of family), for example Anita, Vera, Trisha, Helen; or because they happened to be in the right place at the right time, for example Jade, Patty. Jade talks of a male colleague who really steered her through her early career advancements, and there are a few brief mentions of male and female headteacher influences, but these are not always clearly positive or negative, and are not expressed as being of any particular importance.

6.6 Gender Issues

What was immediately identifiable in the interviews was the way in which sixteen of the women described, at great length and very early in the interviews, the provisions made for child care or the issues around problems associated with bringing children up while working, even though they were not asked to do so. Vera, Cal, Gene and Patty were the only ones who did not talk about this and in the latter three cases their children were grown up before they became headteachers. Vera talked at length about child-care arrangements that she would not find appropriate (such as boarding schools

or nannies) and her concerns about her child arriving home from school with no-one there, and so in effect concerns of this nature were high on her priority list, and Cal talked at length about the effect upon her children even though they were grown up.

It was implicit within these accounts that they each believed that it was their responsibility to organise this care, whether or not they were actually involved in carrying out the arrangements, though I suggested earlier that this may be one of the ways that the subjects claim agency as mothers. This could be an interesting, if contentious area to explore in the future.

It is interesting that the interviews with Gene and Patty were of the shortest in length as they identified fewer issues in combining their roles. There was a sense that they had dealt with motherhood and, while this role was clearly still very important to them, they were now free to give their full attention to school. For others with grown-up children it was still felt to be important to describe the child-care arrangements they had used.

Of the sample, twelve talk of the guilt associated with bringing up children with a demanding job, and one (Cal) heavily implies such feelings, for example:

> "But I've had to question what the bottom line was at times when I've felt guilty, and I have felt guilty. I've felt as if I'm letting the kids down. Should I be there for them? When there's nobody home and the fourteen year old's coming home from high school and she's in the house on her own 'til I get in or her dad gets in. I doubt if her dad feels guilty.... I feel guilty. I still do." (Vera)

> "They certainly don't push the working mum as the ideal mother, do they. And perhaps in some respects they're right, because when children are very small, they perhaps do need their mum, and when they're older. So you're always going to have this dilemma - which my husband interestingly doesn't have." (Barb)

For Jade the guilt is wrapped up with her son's anorexia and her daughter's unwise engagement. She accepts unquestioningly that these issues were because:

"We don't see mum anymore." (her daughter's words)

Sam, quoted earlier, felt guilty about ignoring the doctor's advice about her son's illness because she needed to be at school. What is also evident here is that some say positively that their husbands do not feel or express any guilt, and others don't consider the possibility, which suggests that the guilt is tied up in combining the headteacher and mother identities.

Dulce at first rejects feelings of guilt but then accepts that she probably does experience guilt as she was the one who mentioned the word:

> "This denial I'm in, this denial of guilt. I suppose like any working mother it comes down to the expectations of society, doesn't it?" (Dulce)

Of the seven who did not express feelings of guilt, four of the women (Gene, Heather, Jen and Patty) said that headship and motherhood worked for them because their children were older when they became heads. The remaining three did not acknowledge any emotions to do with guilt. Each of the mothers stressed the importance of ensuring that some time was set aside each day specifically to spend with the children. Many spoke of the need for strict time management and clear time boundaries. Dulce extended this further to clear role boundaries where as she entered the house she almost shed her headteacher role and assumed her mother role:

> "You know, as soon as I get through the door it's like, I drop my briefcase, take my coat off, put my apron on and move smoothly into the kitchen straight away."

The guilt is particularly interesting because each of the women interviewed gave

(sometimes lengthy) accounts, as outlined above, of the support that each of their

families gave to the headteacher role. It was generally regarded to be at least as

important as the job of the father, and often more important. While there was often a

sharing of household tasks and in three cases husbands at home (Heather, Sam,

Dulce), there was no sense of parent role reversal:

> "I often say I would like a wife, because although he's at home he doesn't exactly do all the things that I do." (Dulce)

> ".. and then my husband would take over if he was in before me, but as regards husbands taking care of children, I think it was favoured to stay at the childminder's. You know it's different horses for courses. (Heather)

Some of the women recognised that the guilt came from something built into them,

even though many had role model mothers who had worked and, sometimes, taught

for example:

> "Women get all hung up on this idea of, 'I wonder what they think of me,' you know," (June)

> "I think that's something in a way that's self imposed. Certainly in my case it's self imposed." (Dulce)

> "It's this expectation, that comes back to the gender issue, doesn't it? That there are certain things that only a mother can do. ... I think some of it is just pure instinct." "There probably is something genetic, I don't know. But it's probably also cultural." (Polly)

> "And guilt mixed with ... Like missing the first step, and missing the first word. You feel guilty then. Or you feel as if you've had it imposed on you." (Sam)

Only one of the women said that she was having to prove herself as a headteacher

because she was a mother:

> "But I think there's a lot you still have to prove as a working mum, particularly a working mum who's a headteacher, because I think people look at you to fail. In some respects. They look at you not to be able to do the job well ..."(Tara).

The discussion then considered whether this really was the case or whether it was something that Tara perceived would be so:

> "I think probably the latter. A case of I felt that it might be an issue. It was an issue that might cross their minds and I didn't want it to linger there." (Tara)

It was interesting that many said that nothing got in the way of their jobs while also stating or implying (as above) that their children would always come first - and as has been explored earlier, this was very much tied up with being women. In describing their identities as mothers and headteachers, each had to be paramount and all-consuming - because their perception is that nothing less is acceptable to satisfy the demands of each of the roles. It would be interesting to explore the attitude to this of a man who is a headteacher and a father, but this is beyond the scope of this study. Tara, Gill and Sam became mothers very soon after taking up headship and there is a definite emphasis in their accounts on their need to show that they could still do their job:

> "I'd built a career and I certainly wasn't going to see that disappear down the tubes, thank you very much. .... I knew that I had enough energy and commitment to be able to balance, and I felt to do it well. But I just had to prove that to everybody who was expecting otherwise." (Tara)

> "So I went to the LEA and said, 'I'm sorry, I'm pregnant.' And they said, 'Oh what shall we do now?' And I said, 'Well I'm at your disposal because I agreed to take on this job and now I'm pregnant. So if you want to send me back to my previous headship I'm very happy.... I'll do whatever you want but I really would like to stay and I promise that I will do this job to the best of my ability.' So they agreed to let me stay (at the school) and I was very lucky." (Gill)

Sam also had the added responsibility of running a pub with her husband:

> "You see I had to prove to the LEA that having a baby and being a landlady didn't matter." (Sam)

All the women in the sample identified traditional male/female expectations in the

perceptions of society, and this extended to those in decision-making positions.

One of the main issues raised concerning the perceptions of society towards gender

was to do with discipline (and authority) as in:

> "I did have parents say to me, 'There should be a man in this job,' or, 'if you
> were a man you wouldn't be doing this,' especially on behaviour issues. I
> think the assumption is, because you're a woman the children will run riot."
> (Dulce)

It was also suggested that mother headteachers might have more understanding of the

concerns of parents.

The issue around behaviour was rejected as a factor in school by all subjects. There

was an acknowledgement, however, that such perceptions within society, and

particularly among parents, were problematic in school, as in:

> "And I've had two male parents that it's the school's fault and if there was a
> man in charge ....." (Lynda)

> "I don't think it's gender based in some ways. The actual job itself doesn't
> mean that one can do the job better than the other, but I think from the LEA's
> point of view, they seem to think it is - that a man can do a better job in a
> primary school than a woman. I think women are competing and have to be
> twice as good as men if they're going to get the top jobs." (Anita)

Those women in schools with large ethnic minority populations (Gill, Jen and Sam)

had found this a particular challenge, but felt that they had been successful in

changing attitudes in spite of Dee's assertion:

> "I think the Governors would have, the parent Governors would have
> preferred a man. ......They thought that a man would be stronger, and that in
> this kind of area, that's what we need. .... It's probably still perceived that
> men are stronger.." (Dee).

Nine saw a difference in the qualities brought to headship by men and women (Dulce,

Tara, Jen, Patty, Polly, Dee, June, Lynda, Helen,), for example:

"... but I do feel that there is some difference in the sexes in the approach, especially to management issues. ... But I think that where there are no women in a managerial situation, it's noticeable in that the approach has less empathy, has less understanding or consideration in it." (Dulce)

"And I think they [women] have a different tack on the way they exercise their leadership and management. .... But I think there's also a recognition that women can very often do the job better in some senses. Not necessarily because they're mothers, but I think they bring a wider view to the role in a primary school perhaps." (Helen)

"I think the men headteachers, and I'm talking about primary, would probably be happier to sit in front of the computer and to generate the paper exercises and the documentation. ... so I think there is a gender issue." (Polly)

"... up the road we've got two schools, well three schools - I'm the only female headteacher in our immediate area - and those schools have exactly the same problems, but they don't have the same atmosphere when you walk into them that ours does." (Jen)

When asked what makes efficiency in headship Patty replied:

"If I was being very cynical, and if that was turned off(!) I'd say being a woman. I think a lot of the things to do with efficiency and effectiveness and good organisation, you're born with. And I think because of the way we're brought up, a lot of women develop them in quite a strong way. I think you need to be a good organiser...build up and develop relationships." (Patty)

Some felt that this was now changing and was more to do with personality (Jade,

Vera, Cal, Helen,):

"I think that staff find it easier to discuss, relate to a female head than a male head. .. But I think it very much depends upon the personality of the headteacher. I think some female heads are very difficult to approach..." (Vera)

"Less [gender perspective on headship] now than there was." (Helen)

"It seems to me that male heads like to compartmentalise things a bit more. I'm seeing an increasing number of male heads that have broken the mould so maybe that's something that is changing." (Cal)

In terms of the attitudes of colleagues to women who were headteachers and mothers,

most of the women felt that this had not been an issue (as above), and had even

brought admiration from others. There were three main exceptions - Sam, Dulce and

Tara. Much of the experience of Sam and Tara was to do with being women rather

than mothers:

> ".. I applied for six headships and got quite despondent because four of them went to internal male candidates. And I started to think, 'Am I on a hiding to nothing here? There's an awful lot of Governors playing safe here, and an awful lot seem to equate management positions with men.'" (Tara)

Dulce, however, found a definite attitude among Governors to appointing a woman

with young children as headteacher:

> "Prior to that I'd applied for the headship at another school and was told that I'd lost the job because I had a young child after the interview." (Dulce)

> "… and the day after the interview, the Chair asked me if I'd got children. And I said, 'Yes, I've got two,' and told her their ages, and she said, 'Well if I'd known that yesterday, I wouldn't have given you the job.'" (Dulce)

Gender rather than motherhood comes through the interviews as a prevailing theme.

Few of the women make comparisons about the abilities of male and female heads,

though where they do, some are very disparaging. Most are keen to describe the

qualities of empathy that women bring to headship, not as a comparison but as an

observation, and while many express the view that there is much greater consistency

now in the style and quality of headship among men and women, most recognise that

society has some particular, negative perceptions about women and headship,

especially in dealing with discipline issues. While most are able to turn this to their

advantage over time there is, nevertheless, a sense of the very hard work and

determination that this entails.

The most interesting data about gender comes in terms of the way in which each of

the subjects talks with complete acceptance about the responsibilities of motherhood.

There is almost a trade-off of accepting those expectations which have been imposed

by society around childcare and the 'nitty-gritty' issues of daily life with children and their development, in order to protect the 'special-ness' and uniqueness of the mother-child relationship. The guilt experienced around the dual identity is almost a comfort cushion aimed at preserving the entitlement to this relationship being revered and ring-fenced, even when some-one else is performing the detail of the role - and even when that other person is the father.

6.7 Summary

In drawing all of this together there is the danger of losing the unique aspects of each interview; but it is important to highlight those issues relating to identity and which seem to stand out from the data. All the women felt that their identities as both mothers and headteachers were extremely important and worthwhile, indeed each of the identities was seen as of paramount importance in their lives. In spite of the many constraints around each experience these women appeared to exercise a considerable amount of agency within each of the identities. This may be because this is the kind of women they are, or it may be that in order to survive the dual role they have to possess or develop such qualities.

Within the motherhood identity qualities associated with nurturing, protecting, developing were identified as key areas, and it is interesting that within the headteacher identity, while in different language, the same key qualities were highlighted.

Gender-related expectations were clearly identifiable in all the women in that, even if they had broken through their particular glass ceilings, they still accepted the

traditional mothering role and responsibility for childcare arrangements without question - though my conclusions around this in the section above may provide some contentious areas to explore. While some had partners who shared in domestic chores, there was still a great deal of acceptance that these were the woman's domain. While there was a very high degree of support from families among the women in the sample and a great deal of pride in the women's achievements, there was also evidence that some of these families still felt that the domestic aspects should be dealt with by the women. Feelings of guilt were expressed by a large percentage of the women - even those who had appeared to be very happy with their dual role, and there was a recognition that much of this is because of an acceptance of societal expectations that has become deeply entrenched within everyday experience and learning. Chapter Seven will seek to further analyse the data in terms of the conceptual theories explored in earlier chapters.

Chapter Seven

Analysing Identities

7.1 Over-view of the Chapter

In the early chapters of this study I investigated research and theorising pertinent to women who are mothers and headteachers which were highlighted in the literature on identity, headship and leadership, and women as headteachers, in order to produce a conceptual framework for the fieldwork. Through this framework it became clear that there were issues around the way in which the various identities operated alongside each other which were problematic and this means that the original research questions became much more complex in nature as described in Chapter Five. Questions were raised about whether this was a case of multiple identities or whether there was some other model to explain the experience. Holland and Lave's (2001) understanding of Holquist's (1990) "dialogic identity" (p.9) where one identity was highlighted over another at particular times, according to the prevailing circumstances, was a useful model to underpin the investigation. Their concept of history in person reveal Bourdieu's (1990) work on habitus and field exploring the social construction of identity and gendered identity setting a broader context for exploring the subjects' experience.

Much within these contexts raised further issues about power relationships, dominance and the effect of social expectations, and this gave rise to a need for a fieldwork design which had the ability to investigate these areas. My reading around methodology and methods in research established my decision to locate this investigation within a qualitative framework. It was the feminist ontology set within

the qualitative stance that best reflected the need to address issues of social justice and contribute to emancipatory praxis which influenced the design.

In this chapter the data from the fieldwork in Chapter Six is shown to support the view that educational leadership is constructed as a given, gendered identity, but to challenge that this should be so. The data supports the view that these issues are experienced within a strong socio-historical framework which perpetuates the power structures around male dominance and social expectations of identities such as motherhood.

The data also supports the concept of dialogic identity as the model for understanding the experience of multiple identities, as the subjects are seen to be carrying their mother and headteacher identities with them at all times. They instinctively bring one or the other to the foreground as appropriate; though there is also a sense of threat to one or the other in difficult circumstances (e.g. when Jade's child was ill but she had urgent school business to deal with). What also emerges in the analysis is that the 'woman' identity is also quite distinct but is woven through the others as a definite profile.

In order to present this analysis a summary of the conclusions from my fieldwork for each of the issues highlighted above is followed by an analysis of the way in which these contribute to, or challenge the perspectives presented in the literature and, therefore contribute to theory.

7.2 Identity

7.2 i A Summary of Conclusions From my Fieldwork

The following are the key conclusions drawn from the section on identity in my fieldwork:

1) The women in the sample exhibit a strong and clearly defined sense of identity as mother and headteacher, but also as 'woman';

2) There seem to be multiple identities but the mother and headteacher identities are paramount, co-existing with the woman identity weaving through this;

3) The commitment of the women to each of these identities is total and passionate;

4) Each of these identities defines the women in an apparently complete manner, and yet it became clear that the women could not be fully understood unless account was taken of each of the identities;

5) While each identity defines the women who were therefore incomplete without one or the other, it was clear either explicitly or implicitly that each would relinquish the headship identity if it posed sufficient threat to the motherhood identity - though it was unclear in the interviews how extreme this threat would need to be;

6) It seems that the headteacher identity exerts far greater negative effects upon the mother identity and the relationships involved than vice versa;

7) Other identities which might be expected to be clearly defined and important are apparently less so - for example, generally the identity as a wife/partner, which is clearly of importance, appears to be of less importance than the other two, and needs further research .

7.2 ii Theorising Identities

For the women in the sample the sense of an identity was strong and clearly defined. The dichotomy here is that while, like most people, they have many different strands that make up their identities (wife, mother, daughter, work persona), two of these are so paramount that they each apparently completely epitomise the woman; so that there are two clearly defined identities rather than a total identity that sums up all the roles that a person plays out each day. In this fieldwork the sense of identity as a mother is all-consuming, but at the same time so is the sense of identity as a headteacher. This needs to be set against Ron Lacey's experience (Southworth 1995) where the headteacher identity became his full identity, subsuming all others.

At times, for my subjects, the two identities are in competition but this is far too simple an understanding. It is as if they exist in parallel but with links from the one to the other. These links are sometimes complementary, but often have the potential to be destructive. This highlights Hargreaves' (1996) view that professional growth and personal history are inextricably bound and Holland and Lave's (2001) understanding of Holquist's (1990) concept of "dialogic identity" (p.9). The women bring to the fore whichever identity is appropriate in the particular circumstances of the day. The clearly visible thread through all of this is the womanhood which clearly has a special impact upon the way in which the other identities are practised.

Reading the responses to questions about motherhood leads to an understanding that being a mother is the only identity that matters or gives meaning to the subjects' lives;

it is not one that takes over or subsumes their own identity, it is the one to which they aspire and strive for fulfilment. This is in sharp contrast to the women in Sikes' (1997) study who felt that they had lost their own identity within motherhood. She found that, for some, the women's own identities were subordinate, as in a second layer, to that of motherhood. For most in the present study there is no 'invisible' identity subordinated by motherhood; this is who they are. Tara, for example, insists on her moments of pampering away from the family, but these are luxurious distractions which fulfil an occasional need rather than an alternative existence that she longs for.

Sikes (1997) also found that, for many, the motivation as mothers was entirely for the benefit of the child, while here the women are also satisfying a need within themselves. For Heather and Gene their motherhood identity had to be dealt with before they could take on the headteacher identity and there is a sense that they are now free to develop this identity. This is not because they have lost the burden of motherhood; it is rather like progressing to a different stage in life with the knowledge that they have dealt properly and fully with the previous one. Now as headteachers they still retain the mother identity. Their accounts do not contain the same passion about motherhood as the others, and yet we must assume that motherhood was their all-consuming passion if they were willing to put other aspirations on hold at that time.

The feminist view outlined by Sikes (1997) (see Chapter Two) sees motherhood as "even dangerous for women because it defines them solely in terms of their ability to give birth" (p.5). This view might find resonance with women in some circumstances

who have become victims of their own biology but the women in the present study appear to have far more in common with the other feminist view, also presented by Sikes (1997, p.5) that "motherhood" "is a positive female identity", which identifies these women as champions of the female cause. These women are in no way stifled or limited by their motherhood identity, to what ever extent it may have been imposed upon them by "socialising forces" (Gunter 2001, p.5), as they have been successful in accessing other profitable and prestigious identities alongside motherhood. It may be, however, that these women have a desire for the kind of "success in the world" which Sikes (1997, p.45) argues is "not synonymous" with the social construction of motherhood, and which therefore leads them to develop a high profile, high power identity alongside motherhood.

The commitment to the motherhood identity in the present study is so total, passionate and almost awe-inspiring that the reader could be forgiven at this point for thinking that he or she knows the subject in great detail and that this is the total reason for being for the women. This suggests that this 'socialising' process (Gunter 2001) has been extremely effective within the development of the motherhood identity in the case of the women in the sample, and it is worthy of note that the women here use similar descriptions of love and sacrifice to describe motherhood as do those in Sikes (1997). However, this passion and all-consuming picture of the mothers' identity is also true of the headteacher identity for the women in the sample.

The dilemma, then, is that the responses to the questions about headship also identify a passionate, awe-inspiring commitment and total immersion in the identity which

make this, too, a stand-alone and self-sufficient persona. This passion along with the personalities of the subjects suggests that they would expect to be agents in each of these spheres.

All of the women expressed or implied that motherhood mattered most and would be protected no matter what, but although this identity appeared complete in itself, many of the subjects acknowledged that they as people would be incomplete without the headship identity. There is the same pattern in responses around headship - a completeness within this identity - though in this case it is even more explicit that the other identity (motherhood) is the necessary co-constituent further confirmations of the dialogic nature of identity outlined above.

In the literature studied, while the headship identity changes with time, it is nevertheless an identity - a pre-formed, ready to wear identity which my subjects appear to believe is becoming gender-less. This contrasts with the argument in Chapter Three, however, where the NCSL model of headship is as male in nature as ever with its reliance on measurement and testing, etc. The women in the present study share many of the elements of the ready to wear identity, but their individuality is also striking and they clearly believe that their female qualities enhance their headship.

Perhaps the women in my study are naïve in accepting the Government agenda without question or even recognition, but they each re-shape the identity until it appears to be made to measure. This echoes what Hall (1995) as the women taking hold of the dance and making it their own. The women fit into the prevailing

structures in order to break through the 'glass ceiling' but then struggle to assume agency within the given identity. Perhaps it is the very issue of their dialogic identity which defines their abilities to push out the limits of the structures. In this way the boundaries between agency and structure are blurred reflecting Branaman's (2001) argument that social reality has "many dimensions", though the argument had more to do with the way in which those in positions of power use social reality. There is almost a sense of trade-offs in accepting or just not challenging some negative aspects of the structures in place in order to retain power and influence over others.

In Chapters Three and Four the NPQH, which is intended to become a mandatory requirement for headship, was shown to be a key tool in achieving the Government agenda by setting out the skills, values, qualities and standards (the identity) that a person aspiring towards headship must display – as in Gronn's (2003) concept of "designer leadership" (p.284). The intention to make this a mandatory qualification adds to the power of the government to take control. My subjects appear unaware of this agenda, but the ones who had experienced the training argue that 'real life' is very different and helps them to re-shape the identity to match their own perception of need within the organisation.

The aspect of identity highlighted earlier in this analysis is that of gender. By definition the women in the sample were female. Their accounts have a deep resonance with what the literature portrays about women headteachers - management styles built upon consultation, caring about colleagues and giving others a voice. This is a major profile of their identity, but it is not a separate identity. While gender and headship will be dealt with more fully later in this present section the emphasis is

upon the way in which gender underpins the mother/headteacher identities of the women in the sample and what it means to be a woman in such a position. 'Femaleness' is woven throughout their discourse, to an extent that gender becomes a profile rather than an identity.

Thus my subjects are perfectly defined by each of the identities and yet neither is quite complete without the other. The literature talks about the inter-play of the professional and personal identity where being mothers enables the women to be better headteachers as in Coleman (2001). This is echoed by the women in my study, as are the logistical issues around childcare and juggling demands. The women here, however, present a more complex co-existence of the two identities where the one is almost superimposed on the other, but each affects the shape of the other. The greatest impact, however, seems to be that of the headship identity upon the mother identity and so the drive to develop agency in the one sphere limits the development of agency in the other.

The impetus caused by the pressures and demands of the journey through headship are such that some of the women acknowledged very frankly that things at home were, at times, neglected. This is most dramatically seen in Jade's horror when she realised that her son was anorexic and that she had not noticed because she was only ever at home to see him in baggy pyjamas or tracksuits. It is also particularly evident in the accounts of the women who were in schools in special measures or serious weaknesses categories, following OFSTED inspections, that family life was left on hold at these times. Once locked onto the journey it is as if they are powerless to stop it unless there are drastic and dramatic needs at home in which case, the women either

expressed or implied, they would end the headship journey and concentrate fully on the motherhood route. It is interesting, however, that Jade does not actually do this. She changes the focus and the way that she applies herself to headship but she does not close down this identity.

It seems likely from what has been said above that, however determined the subjects might be that motherhood is the identity that matters most, their sense of in-completeness without headship might be damaging emotionally or psychologically; though it appears certain that there would be far greater damage if it was the identity as a mother that came to an end. In analysing why the women allowed circumstances at school to negatively affect home life there is almost a driven quality about their work as headteachers, as if this is something that is as intrinsic to their existence as motherhood itself. Thus the detail of the two identities may be in competition but the actual identities are not; they co-exist in a flexible state, with one sometimes growing and encroaching on the territory of the other, at other times vice versa, and at yet other times overlapping, underpinning, or supporting each other – hence the dialogic identity.

It is interesting that in the interviews the subjects generally spent very little time describing their relationships with their partners in the detail that they used to talk about their relationships with their children or their schools. It is fair to say that this was not the direct focus of the interviews and that the questions pointed to detailed analysis of the motherhood and headteacher identities rather than that of the wife/partner. Dulce is very much the exception when she focuses upon herself as a wife - gliding effortlessly from the headteacher identity to the wife and mother

identity. While she clearly uses this to highlight her ability to swap quickly back to being a mother as she arrives home from school, there is the sense that this is about expectations from her husband - an inbuilt ability to meet the expectations, rather than another natural identity.

Generally as wives the subjects seem to retain their uniqueness and singularity within the partnership even when the bonds are very strong as with Sam, Paula, Barb, Helen and Tara. There is no sense of a third major identity competing with motherhood and headship. Perhaps these subjects coincidentally fell within a group of women whose husbands/partners have genuine respect for their wives ability to cope with so many demands, or they simply appreciated their wives' earning power. They were certainly generally supportive in terms of helping their wives with logistical arrangements, even to the point in some cases of giving up their own jobs. There is some difference here between those whose husbands also had high power jobs (e.g. Barb and Tara) and those whose husbands clearly had lower paid and implicitly, in the family view, lower status jobs.

In this section I have attempted to present an understanding of co-existing identities using models drawing on Holland and Lave's (2001) understanding of Holquist's (1990) "dialogic identity", and on what my subjects shared with me about their identities as women who are mothers and headteachers, in order to add new dimensions to what was studied in the literature. In summarising this understanding it appears that we are actually looking at mother/headteachers whose 'femaleness', which is fundamental and yet at the same time almost incidental, adds a particular dimension to the person studied.

7.3 Agency and Structure

7.3 i A Summary of Conclusions From My Fieldwork

The following are the key conclusions on agency and structure drawn from my fieldwork

1) For some of the subjects there is a clear sense of agency in career progression;

2) For some of the subjects their arrival at headship was almost coincidental;

3) Others in the sample had been steered through their career progression by other colleagues;

4) Once in headship positions all of the women were striving to exercise agency in leading the school;

5) There is little to establish a pattern among the subjects of the exercise of agency in becoming mothers;

6) Once they became mothers, all the subjects exercised agency within their motherhood through keeping control of childcare issues and ensuring that quality time with their children was protected;

7) All the subjects use their agency in headship and motherhood to work within, but to bend, the structures that they inherited;

8) Much of the imposed Government agenda for headship is accepted without question by the subjects, though they find bureaucratic aspects and unfair methods of measurement of performance extremely frustrating;

9) The greatest constraints to agency in headship tend to be internal to the organisation in terms of colleagues' attitudes and values;

10) Those subjects in schools in difficulties find the exercise of agency extremely difficult and very costly in terms of their health and family lives.

7.3 ii Theorising Agency and Structure

The following discussion illuminates and develops these points. There is very much a mixture in the life stories, of those who were clearly agents in their own career progression, those who found themselves as headteachers almost by accident, and those who were steered some or all of the way by (usually senior) colleagues. There was no reliable indication as to whether they had been agents in deciding whether or not to become mothers, except in the case of Gill where motherhood was simply a happy, if at the time inconvenient, surprise with no sense of agency on the part of either herself or her husband.

Within the headship identity all of the women were clearly striving for agency often against an almost overwhelming organisational structure. In all cases the strongest limiting aspects of this were internal (for example in staff attitudes and expectations) and had become almost intrinsic parts of the organisational structure. This is interesting in terms of the conclusions drawn in Chapters Three and Four where the agency of the headteacher appears to be a myth because of the limitations of the external structures. The NPQH, which clearly perpetuates these structures, has been largely controlled by the Government through the evaluative and instrumental bodies of literature, and is seen by those involved in critical studies as ensuring that power is retained centrally away from the headteacher in 'self managing' schools. Most of the women supported the central issue of government agenda – i.e. raising attainment – but expressed views that suggest that the emphasis upon practices like SATs and League Tables is misplaced. They place much greater emphasis upon changing

attitudes as in the transformational leadership literature, rather than upon the detailed tasks in the transactional leadership literature.

It was interesting that those women who were heads of schools in special measures or serious weaknesses expressed little anger or frustration with the structure which dictated such labels, but rather with colleagues who had attracted the label because of attitudes refusing to accept change and development. These, rather than Government demands or expectations, were the structures that limited and restricted agency, though externally demanded bureaucracy was highlighted by many as getting in the way of focusing attention on dealing with these structures.

The women in the sample who had been in such difficult circumstances had clearly become very successful agents steering a way through all of these limiting structures and bringing about the changes they had aimed for. While some of these led their schools to LEA (and sometimes, wider) recognition of success there is a clear sense of the cost of this journey. Trisha's school is now a Beacon school but in the recording of the interview her closeness to despair at that time is clearly audible and this is so for Paula, Anita and Dee. The strength of their agency is seen in being able to deal with this privately while supporting staff who were devastated, and determinedly steering the schools back to success.

Cal's agency had been tested even further as she had been acting head in a school which was about to close when it went into special measures, and against this background she had to instil confidence and a desire for change and development. At a superficial level it would appear that these women were completely immersed into

the structures around them, thus denying them any opportunity for exercising agency. And yet in their accounts, the women demonstrate the extent to which their agency was tested and developed by the very structures which frustrated them in dealing with all these issues.

Within the literature on headteachers there is much about the importance of shared leadership and professional development. Much within the evaluative and instrumental traditions suggests simple relationships between these and school improvement. Within the interviews there is a much deeper exploration of the complex issues involved in these areas as so many of the women talk about the problems and challenges of persuading staff members to share the agenda. Here is where real agency is exercised by the subjects and where we see the qualities that support the view in the literature that the success or failure of the school is to a great extent determined by the quality of the headteacher.

The sense of agency in controlling childcare arrangements appears to be relinquished by the mothers when they call childminders and grandmothers substitute or second mothers, but it serves to highlight that they retain the position of first or real mother. They are in control and have the power to change the arrangements as they please.

The structures that they are striving against as mothers are those imposed by their own other identity - i.e. the demands of their jobs as headteachers. For some this is just as emotionally draining as the 'failing' school experience as with Jade and her anorexic

son, or Dee grabbing the opportunity of industrial action in school to snatch back a moment as a mother (at the school concert).

In terms of our understanding of agency within the experience of being a mother and a headteacher this section exemplifies the dilemmas and the choices being made in order to maintain the two identities. The subjects made decisions about which identity, within the dialogic identity experience, would be highlighted at particular times, sometimes with dreadful consequences (e.g.Jade). In this way they were acting as agents, not within the roles, but almost standing apart from the identities in order to decide which needed the greater attention.

7.4 Career Issues

7.4 i A Summary of Conclusions From My Fieldwork

1) Few of the women recognise barriers to career progression;

2) Various routes to headship are identified;

3) Career positioning tends to be coincidental or by natural progression rather than the manoeuvering associated in the literature with traditional male routes to headship;

4) Career mentoring also tends to be coincidental rather than planned;

5) There is only one subject who felt that her career had been disadvantaged by being a woman and by being a mother;

6) All the subjects see themselves as transformational leaders but hampered in this by petty bureaucratic tasks.

7.4 ii Theorising Career Issues

Perhaps it is the shortage of people wanting to take up headship that causes those appointed in the last five or six years in the sample, in contrast to the literature, to highlight few barriers to career progression. Various career paths are identified including the traditional teacher, head of department, deputy, headteacher route, and the teacher, advisory teacher, headteacher route. In those more recently appointed there is also an absence of the long years of development and apprenticeship before headship, and a greater reliance upon identification of skills, attitudes and aptitude. There is very little in the interviews which reflects "building new realities" as in the women in Hill and Ragland's (1995, page 8) sample. Rather there is a sense of confidence and security in their position, and an absence of those concerns in the literature around worth and competing abilities.

Career positioning comes through the interviews as an important factor for many in achieving headship but, in contrast to the literature, this is often coincidental and recognised in hindsight rather than planned positioning. This is also true of mentoring. There does not seem to have been an identifiable pattern of coaching and mentoring; rather it appears that experienced colleagues helped, supported and encouraged the subjects on an informal or friendship basis. Nor is there any well defined pattern of whether predominantly male or female colleagues took on the role of mentors and role models. There appears to be a fairly well balanced mix of male and female colleagues in these roles, but rarely any formal planning or intention to establish such relationships.

What becomes clear in the interviews, however, is that these women are mentoring, coaching and developing their colleagues and the wider community in order to raise aspirations and change attitudes to continuous learning. This is very much in contrast to the women presented by Coffey and Delamont (2000) and Hill and Ragland (1995). In the present study there is at times almost a grand mission as with Anita, while others, like Sam and Jen, extend this in order to cross the cultural divisions in schools with large ethnic populations. While this sounds like serving the Government agenda, there is a genuine belief by the women that this extended education role is key to their headship.

All of the subjects saw themselves as transformational leaders. They had gone some way to accepting the Government agenda and some of this was described in terms of being like an obstacle race where they had to accommodate these things in order to get to the serious business of working with staff to transform attitudes and practice.

Dulce, however, highlights one of the very few instances in the interview data of being negatively affected by a male colleague intentionally sponsoring another male colleague at the expense of female staff. It is interesting that this occurred quite a few years ago. She also describes the attitudes of Governors who were overtly upset that they had appointed a woman who was the mother of a young child, and other Governors who would not appoint such a person.

Dulce expresses no temptation at this time to suppress information about her motherhood in order to gain a headship. She has no issues about the dialogic nature of her identity and feels quite able to juggle all the demands appropriately. For all of

the women their dialogic identity was also expressed through their determination to help others to attain headship – even if still within the given identity.

7.5 Gender

7.5 i Summary of Conclusions From My Fieldwork

1) The main issues around gender for these headteachers relate to parents' perceptions particularly about the ability of women to maintain discipline;

2) The subjects generally believe that they have been successful in changing these attitudes but this is very much in relation to each of them as individuals rather than to women in general;

3) There is little concern expressed about discrimination from the LEAs or other professionals because of gender;

4) Nevertheless the subjects who had been heads for a long time speak about having to constantly prove themselves in the job, and to do it far better than any man could;

5) There are concerns about the perceptions of Governors in appointing female heads;

6) Few of the women express any need to resort to traditional masculine management styles in order to gain respect but, even when they are trying to hide their female identity, it is obvious that they see this as very special;

7) Many of the women believe that women were much more suited to headship than men;

8) Most of the women believe that male management styles were now much closer to what had been seen as traditional female management styles.

7.5 ii Theorising Gender

This section builds on the previous analysis by focusing on the women's perceptions of equality and the way in which others respond to them. Most of the women highlighted parents as the main source of undervaluing and presumptions that women would not be able to do the job, particularly the discipline aspect of school, as well as men would. This was nothing to do with whether or not they were mothers, but was rooted in attitudes about gender. This echoed the perceptions about women headteachers in Measor and Sikes (1992) and Coleman (2002), but most of the present subjects were keen to point out that over time they were able to change these attitudes and had won the confidence of the parents. This was often based upon the very fact that they were mothers as well as headteachers; and so their other identity had proved really useful overlapping with, and underpinning, the professional identity.

This section attempts to explore the identities of the subjects as women - the gender aspect of everything above. This concerns leading in caring ways – nurturing which is linked conceptually to their biological functions as mothers, in contrast to the hard rationality and competitive stance linked conceptually to the biological nature of men.

What is clear from the interviews is that the subjects are quite explicitly female; it is like a thread weaving, sometimes almost imperceptibly and yet definitely, through all the aspects of the experience presented. The underlying gender profile holds everything together and enables everything else as the central core of the subjects' being. While there is some support among the subjects (e.g. Dulce, Helen) for Kimmel's (2000) argument that gender is about "hierarchy, power and inequality, not simply difference", generally there is very little emphasis or importance placed upon

this, and the women appear to regard it as an out-dated inconvenience rather than a serious issue. The responses of those who had been headteachers for some time, e.g. Dulce and Tara, showed some elements which echoed Blackmore (1999), Coleman (2001, 2002) and Hall (1996), and for those with young children (Tara, Gill) there is much greater concern about proving the ability to combine the identities. This is not only true of motherhood and headship; Sam has to prove that she can combine these with a third identity – that of pub landlady. Generally the concerns were much less defined and there was much greater concern with Government interference in headship.

It is interesting that there are constant implicit references to the female profile of the subjects alongside a more explicit view that there were fewer differences now in the attitudes of male and female heads. Where the references are more explicit, agency is being expressed through gender. They are secure as women in their roles, positioning themselves within the dialogic identity. Sometimes there is a comparison which establishes a clear sense of superiority over male counterparts, while at other times the comparison simply describes a difference which may be qualitative but not necessarily competitive. Their attitudes support Coleman's (2002) rejection of the polarisation of the leadership styles of male and female headteachers. These subjects see both male and female headteachers in their areas as exemplifying traits traditionally characterised as female – consultation, caring, supporting the leadership of others, though many subjects expressed the view that men are unable to do more than one thing at a time.

According to Grace (1995) the modern market economy perspective of headship has been seen as the male domain and should therefore be even less in sympathy with the female head; but it may be that the very definition of these women as determined individuals within the dialogic identity gives them a pre-disposition towards this style of leadership – even if they reject such a position.

These complex questions about the experience and identity of the women headteachers support the view expressed by Grace (1995) and many others quoted through this study that research into headship has been dominated by the study of males in headship by men, ignoring the wider issues of identity that impact upon the position. They also support the dialogic nature of identity where the subjects are able instinctively to bring the appropriate identity to the foreground at any particular time.

7.6 Summary

This section summarises the implications of this research for our understanding of women as headteachers and mothers with reference to the conceptual framework of the study.

It is clear from what has been presented in this chapter so far that the women are securely located within their individual identities as mothers and headteachers and women and that these identities have a dialogic relationship. The difficulties arise only in the interplay of motherhood and headship and concerns about the perceptions of others about the effect of one upon the other. These come very much from the social context within which women are located, and while they are now very much at ease with the interplay between their gender and headship, expectations of

motherhood are more problematic. The next section investigates what the women said about the practice of headship and leadership.

7.6 i The Practice of Headship and Leadership

At the beginning of this section there is a need to reiterate the link that the present Government is trying to make between headship and leadership. If it is the case that the Government has a particular agenda for headship and that the subjects in this research appear to have accepted the underlying principles of the agenda, then it is also the case that in the detailed practice of headship and leadership the women take hold of this and manipulate it to make it their own. In a socially constructed identity which seeks to severely limit agency, the women act as agents, trading off areas of compliance against their own priorities for the school.

For example, it was clear in the interviews that the Government's understanding of shared leadership had been taken up, but given new definition and purpose in the practice of these subjects. Professional development and accountability had been redefined to suit the needs of the individual school and staff members. While SATs and League Tables had to be acknowledged as a present reality there was a refusal to direct energy and resources at this very narrow area, but rather to use these aspects to maximise the headteacher identity.

7.6 ii Theorising Headship and Leadership

The important implication of the research here is that historically theories about headship and leadership have been based upon research conducted predominantly by

men and, while there is a very broad range of knowledge across the research provinces, those which support a particular social agenda have been given dominance. The masculine focus has tended to favour epistemology that underpins the evaluative and instrumental provinces. The very narrow focus of such research has ignored wider issues around identity and has been used to establish a pre-set identity which must be assumed by those taking up headship. This supports the concepts of Bordieu (1990) and Holland and Lave (2001) around the perpetuation of structures of dominance.

Headship as an instrument of social order and control has been rooted in history in order to serve the social and political pre-occupations of each age, and this continues into the twenty first century via the NCSL. What is of concern in my fieldwork is the willingness with which the women put on this ready-made headship identity. While all of the women expressed concern about the political agenda and the bureaucracy that took their attention away from their main priorities, none of them expressed any intention to contribute towards change. The subjects believed that they were exerting their agency by the way in which they manipulated the agenda rather than by trying to change it.

7.6 iii Recruitment and Retention

It is clear from the responses in this study that these women have a tremendous commitment to their position as headteachers but that the failure of Government agenda to recognise their wider responsibilities puts, at times, intolerable pressure upon them. It is possible that such a situation would put off many in similar circumstances who might have considerable ability but who might feel that the threat to their family life was too great.

While those in the study displayed considerable resilience in combining the identities within the dialogic relationship sometimes, against overwhelming problems, it is as yet impossible to know the long term effects of such pressures upon the women or upon the schools involved.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This study sought to investigate the experience of women who are mothers and primary school headteachers. This was a study of identity through investigating the interplay with agency and structure and the social construction of these experiences. Through the study a conceptual framework emerged which identified issues to be explored around the way in which identity is understood and interpreted; the extent to which identity is gendered and socially constructed; the place of agency within this investigation; how these issues relate to headship; their location in time; and the extent to which such understandings are influenced by the ways in which research is carried out. These issues were followed up in my fieldwork which took the form of a survey using interviews with twenty women who are mothers and headteachers from the North Midlands area of England.

This conclusion to the study will reflect upon the evidence gathered from the literature in the light of what the fieldwork contributes to established theory underpinning these issues, before identifying future directions from this study.

8.2 The Design of the Study

The study used literature and internet search to define what was known about my field of study. While there had been much research into headship (see further sections for the researchers identified) and the gender profile of headship, no work was found which focused specifically upon women who were headteachers and mothers. From

the issues raised in the literature search fieldwork was designed to take account of the experience of subjects. The methodology, developed from an analysis of the interplay between methodology and epistemology, was based upon a survey of women in such circumstances who were then invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. These became conversations, focusing upon their experience within particular issues which were identified by me and added to by the subjects.

The interviews were taped and transcribed and the data analysed against the identified themes and issues.

8.3 Identity and its Interplay with Agency and Structure

Gunter's (2001) understanding of the way in which identity is shaped according to our ability to exercise agency is a theme throughout the study and the issues investigated. Holland and Lave's (2001) interpretation of the drive to gain agency as a struggle underlines the active nature of such movements, and the dialogic nature of multiple identities describes how one identity is brought to the foreground at a particular time for a particular purpose. Bourdieu's (1990) analysis of socially constructed male dominance as a reflection of the interpretation of sexual intercourse underpins the understanding of gender in the study

The women interviewed in my fieldwork clearly saw themselves as agents in each of their identities transcending the structures within which they operated. In contrast to the women in Coleman (2001 and 2002) and Hall (1996) these subjects were comfortably located within their gender and, while they identified very similar issues, seemed to view these as just another aspect of the job. Dulce was the real exception

to this and, as she had been in headship for the longest time, it could be that this is a profile which has changed.

As mothers, some of my subjects identified their children's grandparents or childminders as 'second mothers'. While this seemed, at first, to be limiting their agency as mothers, it actually emphasised their role as the first mother. All the subjects dealt with childcare issues and appeared to have accepted the social expectation that this was their province.

8.4 The Social Construction of Identity and Gender

The work of Bourdieu (2001), Branaman (2001), David (1986), Holland and Lave (2001), provide the research literature through which issues around the social construction of gendered identity are investigated revealing complex interactions of historical, social, cultural and linguistic influences. This is further developed in Bourdieu's (2001) work on male dominance, and Holland and Lave's concept of history in person which set the context for an understanding of the way in which identity is gendered and socially constructed.

An important theme in this investigation is the way in which gender rather than merit determines the way in which activities are valued and rewarded, and this opens up debate about stereotypes and expectations. My interview subjects appeared to have transcended these barriers and stereotypes in having achieved headship and yet, certainly in their mother identity, there was a tacit acceptance of social expectations and a willingness to deal with all the associated tasks even if it made their lives much more complicated and exhausting.

8.5 The Social Construction of Motherhood

The concept of the social and gendered construction of identity provides a context for the exploration of motherhood which is presented as the major source of credibility for women in society. Views in the literature range from the danger of allowing society to define women only in terms of their ability to produce children, to the need to "reclaim motherhood as a positive female identity" (Sikes 1997, p.42).

Within the fieldwork it is clear that for these subjects, while there is a passion about each of their identities, motherhood is the prime identity to be protected at all costs. It appears, however, that this is so mainly at an emotional level because even in very drastic circumstances the women do not give up headship (as they 'declare' that they would). These women, however, challenge evidence from Sikes' (1997) subjects in seeing motherhood as a very positive identity and not just a role to be played out.

Those mothers who had been heads of schools in difficult circumstances best exemplified the dilemmas of the dialogic nature of identity. Their determination to sort out issue at school was very much to the detriment of the mother profile and in some cases there had been very challenging consequences (e.g. Jade and Patty).

8.6 The Social Construction Of Headship and Leadership

Through the work of Grace (1995) and the literature supporting the NCSL the development of the headship identity is traced from its roots in the Victorian Headmaster tradition to its re-working as leadership. The claim that these definitions

continue to support the social and political construction of headship as a given identity which is masculine in nature is examined. Blackmore (1999), Coleman (2001, 2002), and Hall (1996) provide a context from literature of women's experience of headship.

My interview subjects showed no awareness of a Government agenda around leadership – indeed they each believed that developing shared leadership and redefining their own leadership was very much their own purpose. They were, however, highly sceptical about the instruments of Government interference like League Tables, and the accountability and bureaucracy profile of school. Those who had experienced NPQH and other such courses felt that they fell short of preparing them for the real experience of school.

The most emotionally and intellectually challenging interviews were with those heads in schools in difficult circumstances, particularly those whose schools had been in special measures or serious weaknesses. Southworth's (1995) concept of the occupational self was particularly evident here as the women felt that they were defined by the success or failure of their schools.

Many of the overt barriers to gaining headship identified in the literature were not present for my subjects, except for Dulce, and this suggests that circumstances may have changed recently because there are so few men or women attracted to headship. The implicit barriers were more difficult to identify – most had been mentored (but not in any systematic way), but few had formulated any plan to attain headship.

This is particularly so of women appointed to headship in the last four or five years. In contrast to the literature, they express views about much greater equality of opportunity, much greater support and respect from male colleagues, and a much better defined image of themselves as agents of change who are recognised and celebrated for who they are.

My subjects did not see a particular gender aspect to headship because they felt that male heads were much more likely to use what had been identified as a traditionally female style. They did acknowledge, however, that some expectations, particularly around school discipline, remained socially intact. The most surprising aspect of the responses was the willingness with which so many of the subjects admitted to believing that women heads were superior to male heads.

8.7 The Influence of Research Methods Upon Findings

Here the claim by Gunter and Ribbins (2003) that research methodology influences findings and is then "cherry-picked" (Gunter 2001b, p. 40) to support a particular Government agenda is investigated by exploring literature on headship from each of the provinces of research identified. It is argued that the NCSL has made its preference for research from the instrumental and evaluative provinces clear in its framework and Think Tank findings (2002). The work presented from Grace (1995) implicitly supports the cherry-picking argument in presenting the development of the headship identity as one which serves the social purpose of the time giving pre-eminence to evidence which supports the socially favoured position. Robson (1993) describes research as historically male in character which perpetuates socially acceptable influences.

The success of this Government agenda is apparent in the way in which the women in my survey were unaware of this theme. They did not question Government expectations and the basis for accountability even if they manipulated it in order to get the best practice for the school. They believed that within the parameters set they could lead their staff (in a shared ownership) towards greater achievement for the children. They did not recognise the power structures at work in these set parameters.

8.8 Limitations of the Study and Implications For Future Research

There are many issues which are highlighted in my study but beyond its scope. These include a fuller investigation of the influence of race and culture in gender and identity issues in headship, an investigation of the perceptions of men about identity and agency and headship; an investigation of the influence of socio-economic background upon these issues; the implications for motherhood and for children of the removal of social expectations of mothers. My methodology and method had a very specific focus which did not allow investigation of these other issues, though there were various implicit and incidental references by subjects to social class and expectations within families. Because the study began by making explicit that its area of focus is so specific this does not reduce its validity but its findings can only be seen in the context of its remit. It must be understood that race, culture, ethnicity and sexuality, etc. have their own emphases and need further investigation which, I believe, would be most appropriately conducted through qualitative research within the feminist tradition.

8.9 Final Observations

The disproportionate percentages of women in primary education and those in leadership positions are not a simple matter of prejudices and stereo-types in society; they are about much more complex and deep-rooted issues around the way in which expectations of and for girls are manifest in socialisation processes, in career positioning, and in mentoring. These are issues which have evolved over many generations and are going to take many more generations to change. Male dominance and the masculine qualities associated with leadership are not just stereo-types, they are part of the fabric of human experience pervading all aspects of conscious and unconscious social reality.

My place within the fieldwork was made explicit in terms of my professional identity, my gender and the fact that I am a mother and, in the Introduction to the study, I presented those aspects of my autobiography which had generated interest in the area of study. In analysing the data produced I found a resonance with many aspects of my subjects' views, as in concerns about the given identity and social expectations around motherhood and gender, but also some discrepancies. The latter were most notable in the experiences of gender and headship with those women who had been appointed to first headships more recently, those who were appointed when their children were older, and those who had come to headship more incidentally without particularly wanting it. Perhaps it was because I was aiming for headship that throughout my career I was conscious of gender issues in the teaching profession, and it may be that I had accepted the socially constructed identity of headship and was constantly measuring myself against it – thus perpetuating the very structures which I believed to be obsolete.

Many of the women in my study are involved in their own version of emancipatory praxis, in some cases targeting and succeeding in unpicking some of these complex issues around gender and culture and I share this approach. This is particularly so for the women working in areas with large ethnic groups where traditional stereo-types are much more overt and acceptable than in the white British tradition where others are addressing issues of under-achievement, low aspirations and poor self esteem. All of these are brave women, knowing that if things go wrong they will be blamed because they *are* women.

As with most lasting changes in society, change in these issues is likely to evolve over a very long period rather than to occur dramatically. It is particularly within the feminist ontology that there is hope that a better balance of the voices of all in society and a recognition of identity and the right to agency will be achieved.

Endnotes

[1] In Coleman (2001), Hall (1996) and Pascal and Ribbins (1998) those interviewed were not chosen because they were mothers and headteachers, but some of the subjects fell into this group.

[2] Southworth (1993, 1995), Grace (1995), and Hopkins (2001, 2002) are examples of researchers who use the terms role and identity as interchangeable.

[3] This is the case in Mortimore and Mortimore (1991), and while their brief is to investigate the roles of a group of headteachers (though only as headteachers, ignoring any other roles carried by the individuals) they chose not to define what is meant by role, but allowed it to emerge through the reflections upon headship, thus giving a broader picture to the way in which a role can develop. Like Mortimore and Mortimore (1991), the writers explored (for example Branaman, 2001, Gunter 2001, hooks [I have respected hooks use of lower case for her name] 1994, and Talburt 2000) in this investigation do not define role as a concept but allow those studied to create the understanding through their discussions. Through their investigations it becomes evident that roles played out, however, impact upon identity and vice versa.

[4] In contrast to the confusion of role and identity, Talburt (2000) describes the "rejection" of her subject, Carol, of "a singular identity politic" because she sees identity as separate from experience" (p201) which may imply that identity is separate from the roles we enact. We might feel that this implies a very strong personality able to maintain an identity in spite of the pressures of the structures within society. The

exploration of Carol's identity tracks issues of race and sexuality which add dimensions beyond my study, but highlight issues around maintaining one's identity within those pressures and acting out a role.

[5] In the context of exploring research methodology, Griffiths (1998 p. 36) talks about the way in which people "have agency: they can and do construct interpretations of events, and they can and do use such interpretations as reasons to act in particular ways." Thus agency is the exercise of power and suggests some element of choice in those interpretations, but this depends upon a complex interplay between agency and structure and upon the complex personal histories which underpin these choices.

[6] Skeggs (1997) presents a view that those feminist methodologies which ignore class, tend to "reproduce traditional hierarchies of respectable knowledge whereby 'pure' theory untainted by the experience of others is often the most highly regarded (and institutionally rewarded)" (p.20). This works against what she sees as the "standpoint feminist theory" which claims that "all knowledge springs from experience and that women's experience carries with it special knowledge and that this knowledge is necessary to challenge oppression."

[7] Holland and Lave (2001) clearly express their intention to investigate "historical structures of privilege rooted in class, race, gender and other social divisions" (p.4) but as my focus is on gender I will use their insights in this area while acknowledging the inter-relationships with the other groups.

[8] As the size of this study is limited I will not follow the class issue further here but if references to this area appear in the field work this will be acknowledged as an important area for future research.

[9] This will have important implications for work on gender later in my study.

[10] This is also found in Talburt's (2000) use of the term "identity politic" (p.8), which groups people according to their experiences or positions within categories like race or gender. As with hooks (1994) this presents an understanding of the term referring to the way in which groups who are exploited use their shared identity to address issues within society in order to make their suffering worthwhile and echoes Holland and Lave's (2001) reference to the struggle for identity. Talburt (2000), in exploring identity through sexuality issues, says that hooks "valorizes the voicing of identity and experience for empowerment" (p.8). Her understanding of identity which "... highlights the common to suggest a representable set of differences or similarities that are stable and whole." (p.8), is useful in helping this exploration of the way in which identity has been investigated. These writers also accept that while there are "shared positions" (Talburt 2000, p.8), identity is often shaped simply by a sense of "otherness" (Talburt 2000 p.8) or not being defined within a recognised group.

[11] Following Holland and Lave's (2001) argument about identity evolving through struggle we could look at the many attempts in history to suppress or impose identity, for example through slavery, incarceration in prison camps, or by oppressive governments removing the rights or individuality of their people, and this would be similar to some of the investigations carried out by those who contributed to the book

edited by Holland and Lave. But this study has a focus upon women headteachers and so I shall focus upon gender in investigating whether there is a gender aspect to identity.

[12] As a slight aside, but to balance the argument, Measor and Sikes (1992, p.15) remind us that "not everyone agrees that gender inequality is a problem", and we must also understand that there are men who have concerns about the inequalities in gender, as well as women.

[13] While this is not the focus of this study it provides an interesting balance in terms of the literature on gendered identity, though it has most pertinence in exploring male domination of management and leadership positions. Colinson and Hearn (1996) echo much of the literature presented throughout this study which highlights male domination in society and the psychological association of "particularly aggressive forms of masculinity" (p.263) with "highly autocratic managerial styles" and "'heroic' qualities of struggle and battle" (p. 264) in the 1980s. They describe the contribution of the press to these assumptions and associations with masculinities, and show how "management came to be defined in terms of the ability to control people, events, companies, environments, trade unions and new technologies" (p. 264).

[14] From a different perspective Kimmel (2000) sets out some of the biological evidence proffered in history for the inequalities of men and women and some interesting information from the Victorian era is revealed. Various accounts suggest that while women were just as able to be educated as men, this would take a great toll on their physical and mental health and their ability to have children, which was their

prime purpose. The statistics showing that of those women who had college educations fewer were married or had children, were taken to imply that college education produced this physical effect in women. It was also found that forty two per cent of the women, as opposed to sixteen per cent of the men, committed to mental institutions had college education backgrounds which 'naturally' suggested that women were unable to cope with education. It was even suggested that in women who went on to further education, their brains grew and their uteruses shrank. It appeared to male writers of the time that women were much happier and safer in their subservient roles. Purvis (1995) gives a detailed historical account of women and their position with regard to education and this supports Kimmel's argument. It is clear from fiction literature of the time (from the many examples, see "Mary Barton" by Mrs. Gaskell, or "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" by Thomas Hardy) that in the Victorian view, a woman was either a virgin, a wife or a whore. The virgin was in training to become a wife; a wife's duties lay entirely within the remit of providing for her husband's and family's comfort; and the whore, so totally despised by society, was perhaps the one who most protected the sanctity of the others. All of this has left a powerful legacy in the way in which men and women are viewed and the power that they are able to exert over their own and others' lives.

[15] This latter point echoes research by Adler et al (1993 p.40), among many, where Adler expresses the shock in growing up of finding that she was being paid differently, in spite of doing the same job as men, and believing that the only way to compete was to become an "honorary man."

[16] This also seems to summarise what is traditionally accepted as male and female ways of leading in organisations, but Cohen (2003) goes further to suggest that at its extreme the male brain "will show symptoms of autism", though he argues that the opposite, extreme female brain, has never been discovered. Conflict resolution and building relationships is associated, in this argument, with the way a female brain works, while all those areas requiring technical skill or building systems, like composing or painting or being an architect, are better suited to male brains.

As no biological evidence is offered in the interview this appears to be as lacking in substance as any argument based purely upon nurture to account for gender differences except as observed trends; and it would appear from the literature on identity and agency that either nature or nurture are only a tiny part of the gender debate, anyway. Much more emphasis is upon socialising effects as historically located, and far more importance is attached to the values associated with gender – i.e. what a woman's reward for labour should be in relation to a man doing the same job, or how important tasks traditionally associated with women are deemed to be.

[17] Smith (1979) critiques masculine approaches to sociology because they ignore inequality as a major contributor to the development of experience. This makes an important statement about the way research is conducted and its impact upon 'knowledge'.

[18] David (1986) argues that there is a need for "family life and education" (p.11) to teach that there is equal responsibility towards work and family life for the adults involved, and she takes up the theme from Rich (1977, p.50) of "powerless

responsibility" for women who have the burden of home and the care and education of their children, whether or not they work.

[19] These issues cause David (1986) to demand that parenting should be included in the curriculum but without the gender bias that would be likely to be present if the Government's agenda were not challenged. Her 1991 paper reveals that any attempt by the Government to change the situation for women has generally complicated the matter. Giving power to parents in schools through the 1988 Education Reform Act has become a greater burden because it is mothers who have taken this up and yet failed to use the opportunity to influence the picture. At the same time the market orientation of education has further alienated women. Furthermore, David (1997) says that there is still little research into gender equality in spite of the crucial influence that gender has upon marketisation and choice. This is taken further exploring the issues relating to choice in the education of children. While it is mothers who tend to be most involved with these choices which appears to place them as agents in the process it is also evident that these choices are restricting and constrained by other inequalities which are structure-dominated in terms of their own positions in society.

[20] This occurs through the natural socialisation process which is in place in the family from birth through what Bernstein (1990) argues are the conceptual patterns brought to school. This is further developed by Stromquist (1990) in examining Bourdieu's (1984) argument that schools select certain types of speech and knowledge as legitimate in order to ensure that power remains with certain groups, though the position of gender and identity in this argument has been neglected by

those researching the area. Stromquist (1990) contends that parental attitudes and aspirations for their daughters combine with issues of class and societal attitudes to become barriers to achievement for women and the development of an identity which claims agency in the world.

[21] This perspective is important in my study because it sets the scene for understanding the identities of women headteachers who are mothers. This will be developed through an exploration of motherhood as a personal identity and the ways in which working lives of such people are experienced.

[22] For example, the interview with Lesley (Sikes 1997, p41) shows the extent of her negative feelings towards motherhood (and I have to confess to feeling very shocked by the extent of these feelings).

[23] This fits into the debate about teaching as a profession because it explores the way in which the whole life experience of the headteacher influences his/her professional role, and this, in turn, fits into the debate about identity and where agency lies. Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) suggest that the predominant issue for teachers in the second half of the twentieth century was the professionalisation of the role which has been "steadfastly resisted by cost-conscious, and control-centred governments and bureaucracies" (p.1). The debate about professionalism is about where control and influence lies. As we examine teaching at the beginning of the twenty first century we might feel that the Government has moved a long way towards resolving the issue by setting out a very clear framework of criteria in identifying teachers as professionals which suggests that they exercise agency. The

recent adoption of a performance management framework, alongside the exemplification of standards for various job descriptions within education, has set out what is expected of professional teachers at all levels with a powerful means of assessing competence within this structure. By giving such detailed guidance, however, this erodes the teacher's ability to exercise agency and creates an identity into which the teacher or headteacher must fit.

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996, p.1) cite the creation of the General Teaching Council as evidence of the "exceptional vigour" with which professionalisation is being pursued in Britain; but it actually shows that professional judgement is being replaced with a code or recipe of "how to do it". Teachers and headteachers may find this agenda an empty gesture. Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) say that rephrasing teachers' lives as professional lives "is not a given phenomenon but a contested one" with little clarity about what this actually means. Furthermore they see "classical professionalism" (p.4) as being defined in male terms as in law or medicine and they express the view that teaching fails to meet the criteria. All of this suggests that whether or not the teacher or headteacher is a professional, there is a given identity into which he/she must fit, and that agency in the post is an illusion.

Gunter (2001) further develops this theme as she warns that unless educational leaders and practitioners set out what it means to be an educational professional, others will do it for them, thus further eroding the exercise of agency. This follows from Boyd (1999) who says that those with "less sophistication will impose simplistic measures upon us." (p.293). Gunter (2001) sees a need for educational professionals to "exercise the professional courage to tell parents and the community what we do, how

we do it and why we do it well". She argues that unless we do this "education will be mutated into a transmission and measuring process." (p.140.)

Within the arena of working lives, an interesting perspective on the exploration of agency and structure is found in Gronn (1999). He develops Archer's (1995) understanding of the way in which social structures are maintained or changed. The "causal connection" between "human actions" and "the social structures in which they take place" are the focus for Gronn's study of the "leadership career." (1995, pp. 21-22.) He sees a distinction between the idea of a career (involving "sequenced and planned movement and, therefore, some sense of anticipated trajectory") and that of "random" job situations. His understanding of career also involves the "scope to express one's individuality and identity" (p. 25). In relation this places the technical administrator (dictated to by the hierarchical structure) in opposition to the moral, inspirational visionary (agency) who is self motivating, self directing and an agent of change.

[24] The details of the source for the news broadcast are unavailable. I rang the BBC Network information services but they had not retained the details. I have included the item because it was presented on the 7.30a.m. Radio Four news as an illustration of the way in which pay for men and women has an unequal base, though it is disappointing not to be able to interrogate the criteria or parameters of the statistics.

[25] Measor and Sikes (1992) dispute the notion that women take a great deal of time out of their career in order to raise children but acknowledge the challenge for the female teacher in being expected by society to carry the multiple roles or identities of

wife, mother and general carer for whom the career is secondary. They outline various other reasons given generally for the under-representation of women in senior management posts. These include a lack of ambition among women and less ability to manage behaviour, and they dispute these vigorously. As they reflect commonly-held beliefs about women and senior management responsibility, however, the disputed reasons represent a real threat to the promotion profile of women. The predominance of men in senior management in schools is also seen as self-perpetuating in that traditional views are likely to continue to be passed on, and there are few female leader role models to challenge them.

[26] Sikes (1997) uses this in her discussion of the complex problems for mothers who are teachers who may be seen as contributing to the problem of delinquent youth by leaving their children in order to work. It is interesting that this is not seen as a problem affecting a father's choice to work. In her conclusion to this work Sikes (1997) discusses the need felt by many not to share their motherhood identity if they wanted to be seen as serious contenders in the promotion stakes.

[27] Pascal and Ribbins (1998) set out to find out about headship in the post 1988 era using methods which would reveal the experience of headship. The interview schedule focused upon the interviewees' values, opinions and feelings within the unfolding of their careers, but gave scope for the respondents to develop their own themes from these. The schedule is heavily weighted towards the descriptive and telling, and gives ample opportunity for the interviewees to describe, fully, the experiences that have shaped their careers and their lives.

[28] Hodgkinson (1983), Pascal and Ribbins (1998), Ribbins and Marland (1994), Southworth (1995 and 1998) are examples of researchers who use the terms headship and leadership as interchangeable even when they are questioning the understanding of heads as leaders.

[29] The term 'transformational leadership' is explained later in this chapter.

[30] These suggest qualities about the headteacher and establish the identity within the leadership agenda, but are described as activities rather than characteristics of an identity. These leadership qualities fit with a person acting as agent shaping and influencing things around her/him, though it may be that the structures defined by the government of the day and society at large stifle agency and therefore make leadership an illusion.

[31] The use of the capital 'H' here is deliberate to indicate the reverence which the position was afforded.

[32] There is a link here with Southworth's concept of 'occupational self' (1995, p. 15), but the given identity precedes this and may become this over time.

[33] In later sections Skeggs (1997) relation of the need for respectability to the position of women in society will be explored, but it is a useful reminder at this point that people accepted the class structure of the time.

[34] Once again there is a confirmation here that this was a given and male identity. Grace (1995) sees the class structure perpetuated in every aspect of schooling – even in the verse, "'The rich man at his table, the poor man at his gate. He made them high and lowly and ordered their estate'" (p.28) from the hymn "All things bright and beautiful" sung in school in the morning.

[35] Toby Close in Gunter et al (2003) analyses leadership roles (here, within middle managers) as "The Navigator Role", "The Empowerment Role", "The Leading Professional Role" (p.298) which highlight the activities of leadership.

[36] Gronn (2003) refers to the need to "rethink or dispense with" the "exaggerated sense of agency" in headship (p.285).

[37] For example Hopkins (2001,p.120) who talks about aiming for a "flat hierarchy".

[38] Charles Clarke is the Secretary of State for Education at the time of writing this study (2003/4).

[39] It should be noted that the some of the sections have greater relevance for the conceptual framework of this study and are, therefore of different lengths.

[40] These researchers will be discussed in Chapter Four.

[41] This supports Coulson (1976) who found that primary heads' perception of themselves was as synonymous with the school. Southworth (1995) calls this "ego identification" with the school (p.61) and recognises it in Ron Lacey.

[42] As a particular example from an education system elsewhere, Blackmore (1999) uses her studies of "women, leadership and educational restructuring in self managing schools and the education bureaucracy in the Victorian state education system" (p.7) to explore the way in which women bring 'trouble' to leadership. She argues that "strong women are difficult and dangerous because they trouble dominant masculinities and models of management by being different" (p.3). Her subjects, Anne-Marie, Dorothy, Belinda, and Joan are among many who express concern about leadership being "male dominated" and "disempowering" (p.131), and this is characteristic of the many feminist approaches within this province.

[43] Hopkins (2001) points to a need for instructional leadership "creating learning opportunities for both students and teachers" (p.114) as the capacity for school improvement. Within the Think Tank report (Hopkins 2002) the identity of the instructional leader is defined within a list of the characteristics that such leaders display.

[44] Within this instructional leader remit promoting a flat hierarchy of "multiple partnerships and variable leadership" (p.121), Hopkins (2001) describes the experience at Sharnbrook Upper School and Community College. Here the improvement model exemplifies co-leadership with separate enquiries generating knowledge and understanding of the school's work. All members are committed to

monitoring their own and each other's work and connecting with the wider community. What is not clear here is the relationship of this work which encourages independent and creative thought with the political agenda for school improvement expressed through the NCSL

[45] In the Conclusion to the Framework set out by the NCSL (Hopkins 2002) there is a commitment to "promote a discourse which will enable us to know more about how good leaders make good schools" (Hopkins, 2002). Hopkins refers to this a challenge for the College. There is no evidence offered that good leaders do make good schools, in fact Southworth (1993) argues that the relationship is far too complex to make the direct connection. This is in spite of the fact that the ensuing articles show an emphasis upon using evidence, as they are gathered under the title "Towards an Evidence Base".

[46] Looking across library shelves there is an abundance of this kind of literature which offers blueprints for successful headship. As a random example, Greenfield (1990) offers step by step instructions in what to do as a primary headteacher and how to deal with many eventualities. This imposes an identity making headship a received identity but is attractive to those seeking guidance.

[47] The approaches examined may appear to represent particular epistemological roots but this is too simplistic in that there may be overlaps or differences within each group. Oakley (2000) seeks systematic enquiry in order to use the best of each tradition to tackle the gender bias apparent in traditional experimental research.

Establishment support for one of these over the others seems to depend upon the political stance of the time, and Gunter (2001, p. 50) disagrees with Oakley, arguing that a greater "transparency [is] needed enabling us to see the evidence that leads to the judgements about what is deemed to work and why." She also argues that the positions and approaches taken are to do with "debates about values and values of educational research" which are within the arena "of political positioning that seeks to structure ways of knowing" (p. 62).

[48] As the political agenda brings the link between headship and leadership throughout the historical period into clearer focus at the beginning of the twenty first century a strong relationship can be found between these and issues surrounding identity which justifies linking them within my study. This will be followed up in the next chapter concerning themes around women and headship.

[49] In the terms of the issues raised in the last chapter, the writers quoted in this chapter (for example, Blackmore 1999, Grace 1995, Hall 1996) use headship and leadership as almost interchangeable terms which suggests that they have accepted the political agenda to equate headship with leadership and thus as a particular given identity – an identity which, once again in terms of the literature presented in Chapter Three is masculine.

[50] This refers back to Gronn's (2003) concept of "designer identity" (p. 284).

[51] These investigations are interwoven and embedded and do not, therefore, fall easily into clear sections in this chapter but will be drawn together in a summary at the end.

[52] In Chapter Three Grace's (1995) argued that the headteacher's authority was confused with God's authority at this time. Both authorities were presented as male, and upheld in the strict moral code of society, and both were accepted without question by the vast majority of people of all classes as a particular, identifiable identity.

[53] Hill and Ragland (1995), writing from an American perspective, agree that the "official images and expectations of leaders have changed" (p.6), but images rooted in history are hard to overturn. Their emphasis is upon the need to "shed stereo-typical images" (p.6) and to get beyond the "baggage of the past" (p.7) where "the female half of our population has often been ignored, ridiculed, thwarted, or prevented from considering headship roles" (p.6). The work of Collinson and Hearne (1996) on masculinities, Bourdieu (2001), Gunter (2001) and Holland and Lave (2001) and their analyses of why this gendered identity of headship has become established, described in Chapter Two provide important context here.

[54] It is interesting that subjects interviewed (Coleman 2001) found less marked attitudes among Governors in the London area.

[55 In support of these issues, Hill and Ragland (1995) echo this and cite "the good ol' boy network" (p.11) as the cause of a "lack of political savvy" on the part of women (p.11). They say that through this network, positions are often filled prior to advertising because those presently doing the job have identified the next in line from "the fishing trip" or "the club" (p. 11). They argue that women are rarely in the correct position to be considered for leadership posts because such posts are

advertised as requiring experience that they were unlikely to have had, which gives further dimensions to the nature/nurture debate.

[56] In Pascal and Ribbins' (1998) interviews with secondary headteachers it is interesting that those who were parents gave no attention to this aspect of their identity beyond brief mentions of the point in their careers at which their children were born. Sue Matthews mentions that her husband shared in the child-rearing process; Liz Paver finds having her child a great inconvenience in spite of the fact that it is clear that she loved him dearly; and Usha Sahni, who had so many other obstacles to surmount in achieving headship, also mentions motherhood only briefly. It is fair to say that this was also true of the men who were interviewed.

[57] Critiques of Hall's (1996) Study
This note analyses responses to Hall's (1996) work in order to highlight the contested nature of the field.

Reynold's (1999) review of Hall's book establishes that her own findings in Canada echo much of what Hall reveals. She expresses concern about Hall's "concept of androgynous management" because the quest for blotting out gender and other traits "mask(s)" "individualism". The greater concern, however, is in the way in which Hall uses the term "professionalism" "in an all too familiar unquestioned way, as if we all know and accept its meaning"(p.112); and "merges the terms leading and managing". Reynolds (1999) also argues that what is presented about the women in the study is alarming in that it shows how they perpetuate the existence of the glass ceiling (perpetuating the given identity), preventing other "powerful and innovative

women" (p.113) breaking through. Power (1999) echoes this in saying that the failure of these successful women to acknowledge their difficulties, limitations and the problems of role conflict, add to the problems of those still trying to break through the glass ceiling. She also questions the validity of drawing conclusions from such small-scale research.

Jenkin (1999), in her review of Hall, questions the conclusions that Hall draws concerning gender and says that she should have accepted that for the women interviewed gender was not an issue. She openly rejects gender and feminism as issues in her experience of headship except in arriving at being a headteacher, saying that for male and female headteachers in the late 1990s all those traits accorded by Hall (1996) to women headteachers apply equally across the genders. She also questions Hall's (1996) acceptance that women, because of their childhood experiences and society's expectations, have a greater range of managerial strategies available to them than men. Power (1999) echoes this in saying that the account in support of these conclusions is "too sketchy and the connections too tenuous to convince"(p.114). Jenkin (1999) also questions Hall's (1996) claim that she is not looking at differences in male and female heads, and this is echoed by Power who says that "we are certainly left with the impression at the end that these women are not only different but better" (p.115). In terms of the comparisons between men and women headteachers, Hall (1996, p. 48), for example, shows a direct comparison between the priorities justified for men in society and those for women.

Jenkin (1999) sees a dichotomy between the findings of Hall (1996) concerning management style where openness and collaboration were valued, and Evetts (1990)

who found that leading women had to be tough and aggressive in order to be accepted. Jenkin (1999) suggests that in fact the same values are at work; women may be more manipulative, but conflict and assertion of power were certainly identifiable. Jenkin suggests that much of what she believes are Hall's (1996) misunderstandings in the conclusions she draws about gender are because she is an outsider to the profession, and therefore does not understand "the hidden worlds of institutional micro-politics"(p.108).

[58] As an example of the value of this stance I cite the study by Walden and Walkerdine (1985). Their work emphasised the understanding of subjective reality. In their bid to see if providing more female teachers of Maths as role models would enhance the achievement of girls, they looked beyond the results of the study to the reasons for the patterns which emerged. They found much more than a crude negative correlation. Their results took them into personal assumptions and theories held by their subjects which affected the results. A scientific method of research might have measured the effects of the intervention but would not have given the valuable information about why those results had occurred.

[59] Gunter (2000) says that feminist research is about ensuring that personal dimensions are accounted for, which gives the researcher's own experience value and worth. In a critique of Blackmore's (1999) work she says that the work contributes principles for an educational leadership in the particular circumstances of the twenty first century. This points to the importance of emancipation within the literature.

[60] Millman and Kanter (1975) argue that seeing the world as a woman dramatically changes underlying beliefs and assumptions. These have direct impact upon methods and methodologies in research. Gilligan (1977) suggests that even morality is different in women's thinking to what Freud, Piaget or Kohlberg assumed and so this difference is fundamental to the feminine view of the world and therefore to the interpretation of truth and knowledge.

[61] It is important to acknowledge that feminist writers agree that there is no one feminist approach. Stanley and Wise (1993) caution that feminist theory has many different facets. While all use open-ended methods which are moulded to the needs of the investigation, each retains the right to follow her own direction. While issues surrounding women are obviously at the heart of feminist research many see it more as a balancing exercise in order to ensure the rights of all. Others suggest that the only way to ensure women's rights is to focus entirely upon the position of women. It would be wrong to assume that there is one single and united feminist theory or approach. Stanley and Wise (1993) write of the huge increase in diversity in feminist writing over the previous twenty years which prevents generalisations. They write of the feminist movement as addressing issues at a level of epistemology rather than as a distinct methodology.

[62] While Robson does not fully accept feminist methodology he sees value in accepting its emotional dimensions, though he does not see this as necessarily feminist in nature. It may be that this is so because at this point he does not identify any emancipatory aspect to qualitative research as it concerns issues surrounding women. The issues inherent in feminist research go far beyond the language issues

outlined in Robson (1981, p.63), but these issues of language are extremely important in that they indicate conceptual frameworks and acceptances which are long-held and deeply entrenched and therefore affect the way that opportunities for particular groups are structured. This was seen very clearly in Chapter Three of my study where the title 'Headmaster' which came from a particular tradition in Victorian times, actually summed up perceptions about the identity concerned. An aspect of my fieldwork will be to explore the legacy of such semantics in present day experience.

[63] The quantitative/positivist approach to research is that of long term measurement and recording - empirical research which fits into the scientific or evaluative approach. This has a long-established link with the natural sciences where, Wheatley (1994) argues that the world is regarded as a machine with people as the parts of the machine. Where this is across a large and appropriate sample over a long time the findings are felt to be reliable provided that standard agreed procedures have been followed.

In the positivist approach definite results are sought, and although these may be contradicted at a later stage it may be that different conditions have emerged or that the initial inquiry was flawed. In positivist research the researcher usually knows what he/she is looking for and is aiming to prove or disprove a hypothesis. This is not the aim of my study which is about exploring experience. An important issue in positivist research is that the researcher is expected to be entirely separate and objective in relation to the investigation in order to give reliability to the data collated.

Appendix 1

Letter to Subjects

Dear ....

I am currently studying towards the Education Doctorate at the University of Birmingham. For my fieldwork I need to interview women who are mothers and headteachers and I am writing to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed.

The interview would be expected to last for approximately one hour and during this time I would like to explore with you issues around headship, motherhood and the interplay of the two roles. The interview is semi-structured which means that, while there are questions to guide the discussion, the detail is in your control so that we will explore the issues of importance to you. We will explore experiences, perceptions, attitudes, etc. and there are no right, wrong or expected answers.

I will tape the interview in order to transcribe and analyse it. The transcript will be sent to you to check for accuracy and if you wish to add anything at that time, you are welcome to do so. While I will change your name in the interview transcript in order to protect your identity, it is important to note that some of the things you share may make you identifiable, and the study will be available to the public. I will omit any material which you feel threatens your position personally or professionally.

Please let me know if you are willing to take part in this fieldwork and I will arrange a mutually convenient time.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Bradbury.

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule

Opening Statement

It is my intention to explore the experiences of headteachers who are mothers. This is a qualitative study looking at subjective experiences so there are no right, wrong or expected answers. Identity is confidential but the transcript will be used in my thesis once you've had the opportunity to check that it is a true reflection of your views.

So this is the actual interview question or subject area:

Please would you share your experiences of being a headteacher and mother, and to set it in context please would you share your life story from wherever you feel that it is most appropriate.

Scope of interview - to cover:
How do you think that headship is currently defined?
Who is defining it in this way?
How does this compare with how you define it?
How do you think that motherhood is currently defined?
Who is defining it in this way?
How does this compare with how you define it?
How do you think that efficiency and effectiveness in education leadership are currently defined?
Who is defining them in this way?
Are there any alternative models?
How do you see gender relating to these various models?
What do these various definitions mean for you in your experience of being a headteacher and a mother?
What would you see as the major issues for you as a headteacher?
What would your advice be to other mothers who might want to take on this role as headteacher?
What attitudes do you find in either your family or your professional life towards your dual role?
So in summarising your experience of this dual role, are there issues that we haven't covered or that you think are important to you?

The schedule should be regarded as flexible in that if the subject has different emphases within the theme of the dual role of headship and motherhood, these will be explored.

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