

**The Supervisor's Tale:
postgraduate supervisors'
experiences in a changing Higher
Education environment**

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Abstract

The environment in which higher education institutions operate is changing, and these changes are impacting on all aspects of higher education, including postgraduate levels. Changes wrought by globalisation, heralded by rapid advances in technology have inaugurated a new era in which there are long term consequences for higher education. The shift towards more quantitative and measurable “outputs” signifies a fundamental change in the educational ethos in institutions. Effectiveness is now judged primarily on numbers of graduates and publications rather than on other aspects. The drive is to produce a highly educated population, especially through increasing postgraduates who can drive national innovation and improve national economies. This affects academics in a range of ways, not least in the ways in which they engage in teaching, what they are willing to do and how they do it. Such changes influence the kinds of research done, the structures and funding which support research, and thus naturally shapes the kinds of postgraduate programmes and teaching that occurs.

This study, situated in the field of Higher Education Studies, adopting a critical realist stance and drawing on the social theory of Margaret Archer and the concepts of expert and novice, explores the experiences of postgraduate supervisors from one South African institution across a range of disciplines. Individual experiences at the level of the Empirical and embodied in practice at the level of the Actual allow for the identification of possible mechanisms at the level of the Real which structure the sector. The research design then allows for an exploration across mezzo, macro and micro levels. Individuals outline their own particular situations, identifying a number of elements which enabled or constrained them and how, in exercising their agency, they develop their strategies for supervision drawing on a range of different resources that they identify and that may be available to them. Student characteristics, discipline status and placement, funding, and the emergent policy environment are all identified as influencing their practice. In some instances supervisors recognise the broader influences on the system that involve them in their undertaking, noting the international trends. Through their narratives and the discourses they engage a number of contradictions that have developed in the system with growing neo-liberal trends and vocationalism highlighting tensions between academic freedom and autonomy, and demands for productivity, efficiency and compliance, and between an educational focus and a training bias in particular along with others. Especially notable is how this contributes to the current ideologies

surrounding knowledge and knowledge production. Their individual interests and concerns, and emergent academic identities as they take shape over time, also modifies the process and how individual supervisors influence their own environments in agentic moves becomes apparent. Whilst often individuals highlight the lack of support especially in the early phases of supervision, the emergent policy-constrained environment is also seen as curtailing possibilities and especially in limiting the possibilities for the exercise of agency. Whilst the study has some limitations in the range and number of respondents nevertheless the data provided rich evidence of how individual supervisors are affected, and how they respond in varied conditions. What is highlighted through these experiences are ways pressures are increasing for both supervisors and students and changing how they engage. Concerns in particular are raised about the growing functional and instrumental nature of the process with an emphasis on the effects on the kinds of researchers being developed and the knowledge that is therefore being produced. As costs increase for academics through the environments developed and with the varied roles they take on so they become more selective and reluctant to expand the role.

This research has provided insights into ideas, beliefs and values relating to the postgraduate sector and to the process of postgraduate supervision and how it occurs. This includes the structures and cultural conditions that enable or constrain practitioners as they develop in the role in this particular institution. It has explored some of the ways that mechanisms at international, national and institutional levels shape the role and practices of supervisors. The effects of mechanisms are in no way a given or simply understood. In this way the research may contribute to more emancipatory knowledge which could be used in planning and deciding on emergent policies and practices which might create a more supportive and creative postgraduate environment.

Acknowledgements

In the words of Lady Macbeth “Screw your courage to the sticking place and you’ll not fail”

This journey has been one of highs and lows, exciting but also long and arduous. Many of the onerous aspects were my own fault. Lee and Williams (1999) point out doctoral studies can be emotionally fraught and this process has certainly been one of loss, of bullying, of change, and it is certainly true that during a PhD “life happens”. However it has been interesting. Despite attempts to make it otherwise I embarked on the PhD for myself, for the challenge and a chance at sustained intellectual engagement – not for certification, for status or to fulfil ‘performance management’. No amount of intimidation, bullying, incivility or efforts to shift ownership elsewhere changed that although such counterproductive pressure came close to derailing it. Such behaviours by others raised stress levels, slowed things down enormously and certainly reflected new academic realities. However I embraced the challenge and like my father ‘I did it my way’ with ‘a little help from my friends’.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Phyllis and Sid Trower, both of whom died during the course of this study. You ensured and supported my love of reading, and encouraged learning. It is also dedicated to a friend who walked much of the way with me and whose optimism and embracing of life inspired me. Thank you Lizzie I miss you.

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Declaration of Authenticity

I, the undersigned, __Ruth Searle_____, declare that this dissertation is my original work, gathered and utilized especially to fulfil the purposes and objectives of this study, and has not been previously submitted to any other university for a higher degree. I also declare that the publications cited in this work have been personally consulted and acknowledged.

Signature:

Date: 20 December 2014

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CEP	Culturally Emergent Properties/Powers
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GEI	Global Education Index
HBI	Historically Black Institutions
HDI	Historically Disadvantaged Institutions
HWI	Historically White Institutions
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCFE	National Commission on Further Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NRF	National Research Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA	Quality Assurance
PEP	Personal Emergent Properties / Powers
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
SEP	Structurally Emergent Properties / Powers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Chapter One: Supervising in Interesting times

'May you live in interesting time' often referred to as the Chinese curse ... reportedly the first of three curses of increasing severity, the other two being:

'May you come to the attention of those in authority'

'May you find what you are looking for'.

1.1 Introduction

For Higher Education practitioners there is little doubt that we live in a time of change. In particular there is a burgeoning and intensifying interest in the postgraduate sector of Higher Education. Until recently the supervision of postgraduate study was largely governed in-house, and the primary function of such study has generally been assumed to be the preparation of new academics, as well as growing and amplifying the disciplines and contributing in various ways to the development of new knowledge. The emphases on these elements may vary across the disciplines. However new pressures and interests are shifting these conceptions (Andresen, 1999; Bitzer, 2010; Ek, Ideland, & Jonsson, 2013; Johnston, 1995). In developing new researchers, and through guiding their projects which might add to knowledge, postgraduate supervision has played an important role in developing academic knowledge and disciplines, and developing new generations of academics and researchers. However, in a rapidly globalizing world there has been a recognition that there can be a much broader contribution to the economy through development of new knowledge and innovation, scientific developments which improve living and health, and the training of more researchers to work in the economic sphere, and so postgraduate education is now being seen as of national and international importance for economic development and has shot to prominence.

Government and supranational organizations such as the European Union hope to reap the benefits of a labor force leavened with a higher proportion of doctorate holders who are prepared to work in transnational contexts, and to recognize and solve problems that are international or global in scope (Nerad & Heggelund, 2008 p. 5)

So policy reforms, greater government intervention, new ways of funding, the increasing emphasis on instrumentality and employability, the introduction of mechanisms of control such as quality audits, accountability and other pressures on academics have all, in varying ways, affected the sector (Ek et al., 2013; Kehm, 2006). The postgraduate sector is now seen as pivotal in international economic competition and in national development. Such intensification of the process, and the

higher stakes means that much at this level is changing rapidly (Kearney, 2008; Kehm, 2007; McCallin & Nayar, 2012). As the spotlight focuses on the area, greater attention is being paid to how postgraduate study is conducted, how 'effective' it is, who does it and a host of regulations are being introduced to guide and reshape the process, in particular via government interventions and most especially control through funding (Benner & Sandström, 2000). New mechanisms such as qualifications frameworks, quality audits, research audits, university rankings and development indices operating at international, supranational, and national levels all shape and structure postgraduate sectors world-wide to differing extents. Nerad in particular argues that:

... a) globalization has not only brought a number of common trends to doctoral education worldwide—we may speak of converging practices—but also has had differing effects on differing regions and on the more and more diverse doctoral student population worldwide; b) due to globalization, doctoral education is confronted with the tension between building a nation's infrastructure—which means preparing for the next generation of professionals and scholars inside and outside academia—and the necessity of educating domestic doctorate students for participation in the international scholarly community; and c) lastly I will argue that we need to prepare our doctoral students adequately for times of globalization and an increasing national interest in the role of doctoral education for the knowledge economy. We need to educate our students to BOTH think globally and act locally AND to act globally and think locally (Nerad, 2006 p. 5).

Whilst Nerad focuses on doctoral education the whole span of postgraduate education is affected. The change has meant that there is greater government intervention in higher education and in the postgraduate sector in particular. Increasingly institutions are being pressured to find their own funding, thus the funding related to research has grown in importance. The kinds of research and relationships with those that fund it are reshaping what happens in the sector. Thus supervision which is the guidance and teaching for developing these new young researchers has taken on new significance and the way it is conducted has come more under scrutiny. It has come to the attention of the authorities.

Given the vital role of Higher Education in economies, as well as in relation to developing an educated and responsible citizenry Higher Education as an emerging field of study is growing in both maturity and range (Goodchild, 2013). There are however still vigorous debates around its academic status as Shay makes clear along with others (Clegg, 2009; Shay, 2010). Nevertheless, there is a definite sense that Higher Education is becoming much more complex, and as such many different areas are being studied from the development of curricula, of increasing numbers of PhD students studying different elements in Higher Education and growing varied research into social interactions and ramifications. All of these are creating as Shay has indicated "... a vibrant though vulnerable field

of practice brought into existence given the politics of change in higher education globally “ (Shay, 2010). Goodchild’s point (2013 p, iv) is pertinent here “As a field, we need to remain responsive and agile in order to study the ever changing landscape of higher education”. In relation to supervision this is especially important given the role graduate students are expected to play within the economy. Altbach (2014) indicates that it is the growing complexity of higher education, with the massification and rapid expansion of the systems internationally that has stimulated this development into a field of study. The need for not only the institutional dimensions to be researched but also the practices and problems, has become apparent. In this the postgraduate sector has emerged as one area that is important for study as is evidenced in the growing number of official as well as academic studies occurring in the area, alongside dedicated journals and courses (Bitzer & Wilkinson, 2009). As such this study is situated within the field of Higher Education.

Supervision is most often portrayed as a process of mentoring, sometimes alongside other mechanisms such as group supervision. Yet despite the common term, postgraduate supervision is hardly a uniform practice since across the different levels from honours to PhD it covers a wide variety of activities, ideas and practices which are affected by institution, faculty, discipline and the individuals involved (Backhouse, 2010; Lessing, 2011; Peelo, 2011; Wisker, 2005). As an area of practice it certainly fits Donald Schön’s characterization of practice as a “swampy” maze where practitioners need to negotiate and navigate hazards and traps (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009; Schön, 1983) and is noted for its complexity. This affects participants in the process not just at the institutional level, but also in supervision sessions. In particular the different views of supervision indicate part of that complexity, where many still adhere to the notion of supervision as a kind of apprenticeship, a working alongside, or at the feet of the guru, whilst others focus on the processual or administrative aspects (Peelo, 2011 p. 11). Many more, however, in the changing higher education space have begun to recognise that supervising is also a pedagogy. Peelo (2011) notes:

...if research is seen as more important than teaching and supervision is the outcome of success in one’s research identity, then there can be resistance to seeing supervision as a form of teaching. I have been on the receiving end of colleagues’ feelings (ranging from irritation and rudeness through to annoyance and anger) during supervisor courses on this subject - *‘I am not a teacher’; ‘supervision is not a relationship, it’s about research’; ‘good students don’t need teaching’*.

Even for those who accept supervision as a teaching role it is a complex form of teaching... (Peelo, 2011 p.18).

As indicated the notion of supervision as pedagogy, although not uncontested, is gaining in momentum with several authors highlighting its highly complex nature (Adkins, 2009; Bitzer, 2010; Evans & Pearson, 1999; Grant, 2005; Wisker, 2005; Zeegers & Barron, 2012). There is increasing pressure, therefore, for training in this area. Along with those changes are a host of new demands and expectations that are emerging as a result of changes in the sector, and which affect the individual academic and therefore also affect the supervisory practice. Clearly this leads to the need for coming to a better understanding of supervising, what motivates the participants and how supervisors develop their capacity in such volatile environments.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

In the South African context, emerging from a damaging past of oppression, disadvantage, exclusion and underdevelopment, the need for growth and innovation is imperative (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Backhouse, 2009; Blankley & Booyens, 2010; Malada & Netswera, 2007; Nombembe, 2007). Thus the effects of these trends on South African Higher Education, and the postgraduate sector especially, are likely to engender particular responses which may differ in part from those occurring elsewhere (Lessing, 2011; van Biljon & de Kock, 2011).

My interest in the area of postgraduate supervision has been long standing and emerged initially through my own experience of becoming a supervisor. The rather unstructured and almost ad hoc way that this occurred, with minimal guidance and support, was unsettling but also exciting, and raised a host of issues for me in relation to both supervisors and students as well as about the process itself in the broader contexts of institution and system. It caused me to reflect on both the affective and pedagogical aspects of the experience and how it influenced my activities and my identity. I considered how I learnt through the process. I wanted to understand the process of becoming a supervisor and its implications for better practice. My motivation is personal, but also professional and intellectual.

Since I have worked in the area of educational and professional development in one institution for a number of years my interest was professional. Working in the area of Higher Education as a field of study, the need to understand the teaching and learning dynamics, as well as the systemic pressures that shape Higher Education practices is vital. This together with courses in Higher Education, with one area being postgraduate studies, or supervision further consolidates the notion of Higher Education being a field of study in its own right. Given the increasing importance of Higher Education

to international and national development and the particular emphasis on postgraduate throughput such a study has a contribution to make. The particular placement and history of my discipline, both nationally and institutionally also affected my practice. Supporting academics in their activities is one of the functions of the unit I work in, which includes running courses or projects as well as working individually with staff members. Such experiences alongside discussions with others has led to the development of a course designed to support supervision where individuals with varying levels of experience could share practices, explore issues and processes across disciplines and develop and explore various strategies. This deepened my interest as, in interaction with a range of academics, an enormous variety of understandings and practices emerged, and the very real need for such discussions became apparent as supervisors face an increasingly complex and changing process. Greater understanding of the processes could contribute to such interventions.

Through reading for these courses it became clear that much of the literature on postgraduate supervision unsurprisingly focuses on the student experience and on student-supervisor interactions but much less so solely on the supervisor's experience where this pertains to their own engagement in the process (Bitzer, 2010; Rath, 2008). Since the philosophy behind the courses we developed was one of beginning with the practitioners' experiences and how these affect the teaching and learning processes (both their own and those of their learners) supervisor experiences are of importance. This is not just about themselves as researchers, although this is certainly a key element, but also about how they engage in the developmental and pedagogical process of supervision and in their particular interests and motivations which influence the decisions and choices they make during that interaction. These interests and motivations certainly inform the way they come to understand what they are doing, and how they interact with the students. In this way I came to understand how a study might contribute to this under-represented aspect in the literature but also how it might contribute to the course itself in a variety of ways.

The final stimulus however, came when I was quite personally and starkly confronted by the effects of the broader changes in higher education. I and my students were affected by the implementation of new rules and regulations. I was forced to recognize what the real effects of the systemic changes were for individuals in their work and in this case, in their supervision sessions. I experienced first-hand the visceral responses that these could elicit from staff, students and how these reflected onto the institution itself. This provoked thought about the effects of the changing academic environment on the way supervisors approached their task and how this could impact their practice, and own identities, and on how it affects their own particular concerns and interests.

Sometimes it takes an incident or event to bring sharply into focus the effects of such changes upon ourselves and on our practices (and perhaps the emergence of new practices). Such was the case when, after several years of supervising at postgraduate level, I received a letter the tone and tenor of which I found in the first instance startling, and disturbing. It challenged ideas commonly touted about postgraduate supervision and the relationships that need to be developed between students and their supervisors, as well as between participants and the institutions in which they were situated (Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 2004; Lee, 2008; Lee, 2010; Phillips & Pugh, 1994, 2005). In the face of concerns about graduate numbers and teaching capacity at this level these concerns continue to grow (ASSAF, 2010; Education, 2009; Nerad, 2006, 2008).

Having supervised at the Masters level for several years I had been given the opportunity to begin supervision at the Doctoral level through being invited to co-supervise with senior academics. I embraced the chance, seeing an unusual opportunity for being mentored through the process and thus embarked on the next level of supervision. Disappointingly the process did not provide the anticipated mentoring, although it was an enriching learning experience nevertheless. This raises questions around relationships between staff, what the roles are and who decides. The experience of co-supervising proved to be as individual a process as my initial entry into supervision. Then the letter arrived. The letter sent to me by the faculty (pers correspondence 2007) in a few lines ordered me to “....withdraw from any PhD supervision with immediate effect.” since it had come to the faculty’s attention (despite the process having been approved by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee in the first instance) that I was co-supervising two doctoral students – both of whom I had already taken to the point of proposal presentation and both of whom had been accepted on the strength of their proposed studies (neither of the main supervisors gave input into the proposal at its preparation stage). The technologies of power, the committees, and emergent policies were suddenly being made apparent, highlighting decision making centres and how these could influence individual relationships.

The letter had a number of effects, not only on myself, but on my students and on colleagues, as well as on the discipline or field of study which only had a small staff complement and was slowly in the process of developing staff capacity in a range of areas including postgraduate supervision. Issues of who was supervising, and who should (and/or could) supervise and at what level surfaced. The role and function of the postgraduate degrees and processes which has been the topic of some research were also highlighted. There was a shift from individual and disciplinary decision making to

a more institutional centre. Who controls issues of research, of knowledge development and what is the effect on individuals and disciplines? The HDC was effecting decisions taken at Senate as influenced by CHE and HEQC guidelines. It seemed that a variety of radically contradictory elements were embedded in this small event. Despite the disclaimers, “This in no way reflects on your supervision ability but is informed by Faculty policy and CHE¹ requirements” (pers communication 2007), the message, given its tone, was one of, at worst, transgression and inability to perform, or at best, of indifference and a lack of recognition, care or knowledge by the institution (or at least the faculty) about the efforts of their staff. These were mechanisms of surveillance and assessment being used to create certain staff subjectivities. It certainly posed a very different relationship between academic and institution than I held.

So contradictions are rife, the challenge to academic freedoms, the raising of issues of compliance versus engaged thinking, the stated need for capacity yet exclusion of potential supervisors, and the alienation of staff, the need to graduate more students yet the alienation of students –in this instance one withdrew, the other I had to expend a great deal of time and energy to persuade him to continue with his studies. He has since successfully completed although certainly not in minimum time. Clearly the emphasis on measurement and efficiency, as well as compliance over-rode individual development and highlighted the broader issue of the role of higher education. It pushed me to ponder a variety of considerations. What do we set out to achieve at the postgraduate level, is there a move toward personal development, intellectual engagement and the development of critical thinking, embracing a notion of a contribution to the public good and a critical citizenry or is the shift towards a more instrumental process? How do these moves contribute towards the transformation and social justice processes that are so vital in the current South Africa in particular? Who is included or excluded in the supervision process, why and with what effect? Does a qualification signify ability? Is it a good indicator of performance, should such activities be licensed? What are the quality issues here? How do supervisor experiences reflect and embody these issues?

However, it appears that it was indeed not a personal interaction, but rather a bureaucratic measure that the faculty was taking to ensure that only those with Doctoral degrees themselves were supervising at this level in line with national suggestions. Several other staff received similar letters.

¹ CHE is the Council on Higher Education, the statutory body that oversees the Higher Education sector in South Africa. www.che.ac.za

The unfortunate manner of informing people, a case of problematic communication and interpersonal skills, served only to emphasize the issue. Nevertheless, I have been aware of my own responses and reactions, their costs and benefits, the challenges to professional identity and it raises issues for me of how others experienced their changing situations and how it affects their professional identities.

So how did we get to this point? In reflecting on this it becomes clear that the motivating circumstances or drivers for this experience exist on several levels, faculty and institutional policy, national and international interests. In the South African context the system has been overhauled through the new Higher Education Act of 1997 which established the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) which set in motion a new process of institutional and programme audits. This process is explained in a later chapter in greater depth. The effects of these audits, and the Council on Higher Education and Higher Education Qualification Framework guidelines were clearly driving forces in this process (pers. correspondence 2007). These national reforms impact on institutions, but in the broader arena national desires to compete internationally drive governments (and particularly the South African government given continental issues) in relation to how they steer higher education systems. For institutions within this context, the need to feature in international ranking tables, to style one's institution as a research intensive institution is vital in terms of positioning to attract the best possible resourcing. At the same time the agenda for transformation, equity and social justice so vital in the South African context also affects supervision. Interactions between the various levels may very well be like many digital interactions, asynchronous (ie: they do not necessarily occur concurrently). The effects will, however, eventually play out at a personal level as this example shows. The development of bureaucracies and procedures within institutions, have been important but their implementation may happen in different ways. Practitioners may not be cognizant of the broader processes at macro level. So I use this tale as a stimulus to examine my own position but also to come to a better understanding of the bigger picture formed by the postgraduate sector in higher education. What appears to be a simple and single incident masks is a complex working of an open system. The issue is to explore the concealed depths of such experiences.

The underpinning philosophy that informed this study is a realist one, drawing on the work of Bhaskar, which will be explored in the following chapters along with the social realist theories which Archer delineates to explain change and agency (Archer, 1982, 2003, 2007a, 2012; Bhaskar, 1979, 1989, 2002). With the concept of a stratified ontology, and a relativist epistemology it seemed to fit

well with an interest in the interrelationship between individual experiences and the broader social structures and just how much individuals are influenced and are affected by the social environments in which they find themselves. It also raises the issue of what individuals bring to the supervision process.

This will provide a frame for this study into how supervisors experience the supervision process and how this affects not only their academic identity but their practice as well. This is necessary in order to see how, in particular contexts, the globalising trends take on different forms and show the interface between the macro and micro social environments. The South African context is one of those particular contexts. I work in one of the 23 public Higher Education universities in South Africa, and one which has been one of the top 6, which has had a privileged history, ie: it is relatively well resourced, has traditionally had well qualified staff and attracted better prepared students. It persistently monitors its position in the international rankings, although such positionings may be contested or open to interpretation for a variety of reasons. This provides the context for my study.

Issues of supervision will be examined in the context of this one institution, through interviews with individuals at different stages of their academic and supervisory careers, and in different disciplines and faculties. It is their dialogue with aspects of their environment, how they shape and are shaped by the contexts they find themselves in that provides data for this study.

1.3 Research Goal

Despite the changes occurring within the postgraduate sector, forms of supervision remain largely the same. In sciences this may be more team based, in other areas, the more traditional dyadic supervision holds sway. It may be unsurprising then that much of the literature comments on the importance of the relationship between student and supervisor, or on student learning (Bitzer, 2012). Nevertheless in exploring how supervisors experience the process and how they react to this, what they bring in terms of their concerns and interests, and their own professional identity, it may be possible to begin to understand how these influence the supervision process in particular ways.

What supervisors see themselves as doing and achieving in this academic role as part of their more encompassing professional identity, what happens when they confront change, and work within the emergent structures and culture of their environment, and their motivations are powerful shapers of the supervision environment. This study sets out to explore some effects of these issues and the

importance of the agency that supervisors may exercise, how it affects their interactions and the development of supervision in their particular contexts. My goal is to understand and explain postgraduate supervision from the supervisor's perspective within their context and their emergent interests and concerns which may affect the process. By exploring these further insight might be provided as to how individual practice evolves and relates to other academic interests.

Another goal is to draw on and contribute to a theoretical discussion which assists in explaining why these supervisors act so rather than otherwise (Archer, 2003 p. 3). In doing so hopefully I will be able to explore not just the immediate but the deeper, less apparent reasons and longer term aspects which influence practice. It is hoped to uncover ideas, beliefs and values as well as institutional, national and international structures which enable or constrain the evolution of supervisory practices. Through this it might perhaps be possible to contribute to greater understanding and knowledge about some South African supervisory practices, as well as to provide insights which might be helpful in developing postgraduate supervision. As Bhaskar maintains:

... the essential movement of scientific theory will be seen to consist in the movement from the manifest phenomena of social life, as conceptualized in the experience of the social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitate them (1979 p.32).

1.4 Research Questions

The key research question that this study addresses is:

How do supervisors experience postgraduate supervision in a changing environment?

In exploring this issue three further sub-questions emerged:

- a) What enablements and constraints do supervisors face engaging in supervision?
- b) How does supervisors' agency reflect their concerns and shape their supervisory practice?
- c) What is the effect on academic identity of their supervisory experiences?

1.5 Outline of the Dissertation

This chapter has provided a broad outline of the study, provided a context and indicated what the questions were that guided the research. The goals were indicated. In the following chapter the study is located within a critical realist framework, which provides the meta-theory for the research. The philosophical underpinnings are articulated through a clarification of concepts and an exploration of the work of Bhaskar, Archer and others. Through the elucidation of Bhaskar's notions

of realism it describes a layered ontology and a relativist epistemology and then moves onto a discussion of the methodological issues related to this. I then summarise Margaret Archer's social realist theory and her analytical dualism framework is outlined since it shows how structure, culture and agency can be examined as separate and different social strata enabling their interactions to be explored more successfully.

Chapter three explores further how Archer's notion of agency and structure is operationalised through the idea of the internal conversation, and its links to ideas of academic identity. Archer's later work on reflexivity and how agency is instantiated through different reflexive processes related to individuals preferences for stasis or change is explored (Archer, 2007a, 2012). Archer's notion of the internal conversation and how this contributes to agency is outlined here. Through reflection on their practice, and assessing costs and benefits, individuals make their way and whilst working in situations not entirely of their making, they contribute in a variety of ways to how those situations and roles may be shaped.

An overview of the issues that challenge the postgraduate sector and developments both internationally, but more specifically within the South African context is provided in chapter four. It begins by exploring the macro environment which shapes and drives Higher Education and those who work within it. It engages with issues of postgraduate supervision as they are emerging both in the broader, and then in the local, context. Some of these are shaped in particular ways in the South African contexts, and the institutional positioning, which is very much a consequence of their history within the South African educational system is yet another factor influencing emerging practices. Having explored the more macro contexts, literature which engages with a variety of issues in the postgraduate sector will be examined. The effects of institutions and institutional aspects which affect the supervision process will be discussed. Newer literature looks at how individual academics engage with their various roles, and negotiate their academic identities in a variety of ways (Dahan, 2007; Henkel, 2000, 2012). Chapter five takes up the notion of identity, and shows how research reflects on the way individuals, perhaps through their supervisory roles, both confront and mediate structure and culture and how this affects their academic identity.

Chapter six outlines how the study was undertaken, who the participants were, and how the data was collected and dealt with. In particular, individual interviews, with academics at different stages of their careers, in different disciplines, and with different levels of supervisory experience, provide the data on which this study was based.

The data gathered is examined in broad review in chapters seven and eight, where the responses of the eight respondents indicate their reactions to supervising and their experiences. In these chapters the general responses are explored, where they show common reactions. In chapter nine, however the focus moves into the individual tales as they related to identity as it emerged through reflection on specific experiences. Whilst it was never the intention to explore reflective modes, as the tales were examined two narratives in particular stood out as similar to those Archer describes in her work on the inner conversation. The chapter, therefore, ends with some tentative speculation about how the work environment may affect one's reflective mode.

Chapter ten concludes the study by drawing together the themes and issues which reflected from these individual cases and relates them to the conceptual framework. Supervision from the supervisor's perspective and the role that agency, structure and culture has played in the experience will have been outlined. Any limitations and further research will also be indicated.

Chapter Two: Of Ontologies and Epistemologies: Positioning the study

Educational researchers today are faced with a plethora of research methods and methodologies which may sometimes be confusing. Gunzenhauser and Gerstl-pepin (2006 p. 320) drawing on Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Crotty (1998) indicate that:

..there are many views that a researcher may receive and, more importantly, multiple theoretical perspectives...with which a researcher may engage. These multiple theoretical perspectives give educational researchers a wide array of theoretical and methodological tools for engaging problems and questions. Researchers have expanded the boundaries of knowledge, subjectivity, and identity in research, incorporating emergent social, critical, and post-structural theories that challenge traditional notions concerning the philosophy of science.

2.1 Background

The way educators and researchers understand the world and how they find out about that world, their beliefs and values all affect their professional practices, what they do, how and why they do it. Thus it is clear that educational researchers need to reflect deeply on the beliefs and assumptions that underpin their research, the kinds of questions that they wish to explore and how they go about it. Scott (2000) points to the difficulties that many educational researchers have whilst defining some of the key elements that are important as a base for those reflections:

The field of education is riven with disputes, not least about the veracity of different research approaches. These are usually conducted at the level of method and strategy with little attention paid to epistemology and ontology. And yet it is only at these levels that the real issues are foremost. Epistemology focuses on knowledge, ontology on the reality which we seek to know. (Scott, 2000 p. 11)

Embarking on a study such as this one into postgraduate supervision then, a researcher needs to review different standpoints and explore the values and beliefs that inform them to determine what approach to adopt. This is particularly true of educational research where there are a variety of subjects or disciplines, as well as research which cross cuts disciplines. In itself education is interdisciplinary, and thus researchers may need to have a breadth of knowledge, and be able to deal with different kinds of research. Krauss in his exploration of different research positions makes a similar point:

Different modes of research allow us to understand different phenomena and for different reasons (Deetz, 1996). The methodology chosen depends on what one is trying to do rather than a commitment to a particular paradigm (Cavaye, 1996). Thus, the methodology employed must match the particular phenomenon of interest. Different phenomena may require the use of different methodologies. By focusing on the phenomenon under examination, rather than the methodology, researchers can select appropriate methodologies for their enquiries (Falconer & Mackay, 1999). (Krauss, 2005 p. 761)

This chapter explores a variety of different possibilities whilst also outlining the ontological foundations for this study. This study will use a critical realist ontology, and a social realist approach to explore supervision practices in a higher education system that is undergoing wide ranging changes, and which in themselves may vary between disciplines. That postgraduate supervision is a phenomenon of teaching and learning within the broader range of such Higher Education activities, which exist at all levels of complexity clearly situates it within the field of Higher Education. Of particular interest is how supervisors develop certain practices, and what influences that development, be it personal, professional or institutional. How far does the supervisor's personal and professional identity affect the process, and is in itself influenced? An implicit question, which underpinned my interest in this topic, was: how far individuals' experiences reflect how they influence the system which they find themselves a part of, and how far they can reflect how the system imposes itself upon them. In this case the system is the Higher Education system specifically. Clearly then, the study deals directly with an issue that has long been problematic in sociology, that of structure and agency, albeit at a very personal or individual level. The potential of critical realism to illuminate these aspects makes it appropriate for the study, and the fundamental underpinnings of critical realism will be outlined in the following sections.

2.2 The Ontological Basis for Critical Realism

Critical realism, developed in large measure through the work of Roy Bhaskar (1979), and which he, in particular, refers to as transcendental realism, emerged in reaction to the existing research paradigms. It provides a stringent critique of positivism and related approaches, but also indicts constructivist and critical paradigms. It specifically theorises the way structure and agency operate in producing society and challenges dichotomous thinking in relation to many social issues such as mind, body; voluntarism, determinism and holism, atomism. As opposed to other paradigms, which are seen as basically methodological and scientific, critical realism has been described as a philosophical ontology (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998 p. 22). It has since been extended and enhanced by theorists like Margaret Archer (2000; 2003), Collier (1994), Lawson (1997), Scott (2000), Sayer (1992) and others who have contributed significantly to its development in relation to social science research. "Transcendental realism was born in the context of vigorous critical activity oriented against the positivist conception of science that had dominated the first two-thirds of the twentieth century." (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson and Norrie, 1998 p. x). In the process of this critique the defining aspects of critical realism emerge.

As with other realists, critical realists acknowledge a reality that exists independently of knowing subjects. It exists irrespective of being known or understood, and could continue operating without such. However, beyond this, in developing their social theory, critical realists diverge from other realist positions. In particular, they critique other realist paradigms such as positivism and empiricism (naïve realism), for an atomistic, superficial and narrow approach that does not, and cannot, take account of complex situations. In positivist studies there is a separation of the researcher from the researched, as the researcher tries, as far as possible, to remain aloof from the action, and to limit any influence they might have. The principle of objectivity, bias- and value- free investigation is fundamental in the design, implementation and reporting of such studies. As such, the researcher follows a standard research design, and seldom has to expand on their role and stance. Kincheloe (2001) describes the process in which scientists:

...tend to study the world as if ontologically it consists of a series of static images. Entities are often removed from the contexts that shape them, the processes of which they are part, and the relationships and connections that structure their being-in-the-world. Such ontological orientations impose particular epistemologies, specific ways of producing knowledge about inert entities. In this ontological context, the task of researchers is reduced, as they simply do not have to worry about contextual insights, etymological processes, and the multiple relationships that constitute the complexity of lived reality (Kincheloe, 2001 p. 688-9).

However, along with other groups, critical realists refute the notion that research can be value free. Knowledge always occurs within a particular context, and there is previous knowledge or a pre-text (McKenzie, Powell, & Usher, 1997). The important aspect to this is the interaction between the familiar (prior knowledge and context) and the strange or new. Understandings may change or transform when encounters between known and new occur. This is reflected in Scott's comment: "Educational research is itself educational. The researcher is as much a learner as those who form the subject matter of the research" (Scott, 2002 p.2).

Bhaskar (1979/89) outlines a number of fallacies which he sees positivistic approaches incorporating, the most problematic of which is the epistemic fallacy. The epistemic fallacy is the confusing of what and how we know something, with the object itself. With their emphasis on observation and empiricism, positivist approaches confuse or elide the knowledge they gain through their methods with reality itself.

Critical realism is careful to distinguish between the two, social reality is seen as made up of social objects and structures that are relatively enduring and independent, whilst knowledge gained about those social objects and structures is understood to be partial and imperfect and therefore open to change. Thus ontology and epistemology are kept separate. This is an important differentiation and it enables allowance to be made for both social stability and change. Inherent within this differentiation is another, that between the intransitive, or the real, the relatively enduring (this is referred to as ontological realism) – and the transitive, or the knowledge that we have about the real, which is fallible. This is what critical realists refer to as epistemological relativity. What this highlights is the fallibility of knowledge, whilst leaving the object of reality unchanged.

2.3 Open and Closed Systems

The separation of objects of knowledge from knowledge itself lays the foundation for further differentiation, which enables a greater exploration of how we come to an understanding of reality, and of how change or transformation happens within a structured environment. One basic social realist claim is that society is an open rather than a closed system. A closed system is presupposed by positivistic approaches, particularly given their drive toward universalism and predictability. Scholes describes this closed system as self-regulating, self-sustaining and systematically complete (Scholes quoted in Sibeon, 2004 p.39). This predictability and regularity reflects a deterministic notion of society. Bhaskar (1998) maintains that inductive processes require a closed system, "The

condition of the intelligibility of the problem of induction is an ontology of atomistic events and closed systems. For without closed systems there is no reason for the past to resemble the future and without atomistic events there is reason why it should" (Bhaskar, 1998 p.94). It is clear through the experimental processes in science that events are seen to happen within the same time and space. This conjoined nature of events provides critical realists with a further key point of critique: "In place of the ontology of experience and atomistic events constantly conjoined, transcendental realism establishes an ontology of complex and active structures and things. ...transcendental realism allows knowledge of both things and of their powers or ways of acting." (Bhaskar, 1998 p. 94). In particular, they maintain that events and their consequences need not be coterminous.

Whilst much of the focus has been on challenging naïve realism, critical realism also critiques the more hermeneutical approaches to research. These approaches such as interpretivism, and constructivism, like social realism, also critique positivist approaches. Their rejection of positivist approaches has seen a move towards greater dependence on experience and qualitative data, generally textual. Their emphasis on privileging experience and perception at the extreme is seen as highly relativistic, which does not allow for prioritising reasoned choices between the multiple interpretations that are possible. Critical realists are quick to indicate that such research also suffers from the epistemic fallacy, in this instance generally substituting the text for reality. It is pointed out that what people say, is not necessarily what is. Here we see a social system that is not closed, but is so open that it becomes problematic.

Not only structuralism, but also poststructuralism...is implicated in a form of social determinism that neglects agency ... Structuralists propose, first of all, that neither signifier nor signified represent or are linked to anything 'real'...Texts, and, by implication, society are open to multiple 'readings' (an emphasis on the reader) and any interpretation or reading is never 'finished' or 'final' but is and should be subject to endless challenges and re-interpretations... Nothing is really real and the analysis has to centre on discourses (Sibeon, 2004 p.39).

The ability to not only critique the prevailing paradigms but also to work to rescue the best elements of both of them, and bring them into some kind of synergy is seen by many as a great leap forward in dealing with some of the challenges of social research in particular, even by those who raise concerns about Critical Realism (Assiter, 1996; Gorski, 2013; Lemert, 2002). Nevertheless these critics raise some aspects which bear consideration. Steele (2005), for example, indicates that critical realism is posited as an alternative to the deduction of mathematics and the inductive processes of statistics offering instead, and especially in the area of the social sciences, a process of retrodution. This would entail the use of metaphor, analogy, intuition and ordinary language, pointing to the

importance of the role of conceptualisation, in analysis. He recognises that some of the more quantitative processes may provide a rather superficial response to certain issues and in this overlooks the complexities and multiplicities with regard to social interactions. However, if one cannot draw upon the regularities that science prioritises, the concern of what constitutes a legitimate methodology comes to the fore. Steele (2005, p 136) feels that critical realists "...recognise only their kind of rhetoric and their kind of ontology as legitimate and they jealously protect that ontology from any kind of testing...". He makes the point that using experiment and regularities have served society well in terms of increasing knowledge, whilst acknowledging that this knowledge is fallible. Critical realists might counter this with their contention that they do not entirely disregard regularities but rather treat them more cautiously.

In order to allow for complexity, dynamism and change it is necessary to have the notion of an open system. However, an open system may also allow for some degree of consistency whilst not precluding changes or disruptions. Lawson has explored this idea and has coined the term *demi-regularities*, abbreviated as *demi-regs* to refer to such consistencies

...it is not the case that the only conceivable alternative to well controlled explanation [closed systems/experiments]...is a totally unsystematic, incoherent, random flux. Over restricted regions of time – space certain mechanisms may come to dominate others and/or shine through: non-spurious, rough and ready, partial regularities may be observed. Although the social world is open, dynamic and changing certain mechanisms may over restricted regions of time-space, be represented continuously... (Lawson in Archer et al., 1998 p.149) (square brackets my insertion).

Thus, certain events and occurrences may tend to happen in conjunction, but it is possible that something may interfere in the conjunction at some point. Critical realists acknowledge that there is seldom a one to one interaction between two individual mechanisms, but rather several mechanisms generally interact with one another at any point. The more mechanisms that are involved the more difficult it becomes to predict or anticipate the outcome and this is why critical realists, rather than subscribing to predictive, universal laws, note that there may be tendencies but that these are only relatively enduring, not fixed and invariable. Educationists would recognise this as a particular strength, since certain studies are limited and reductionist in nature and do not represent the full complexity of the problem under investigation. For example the equating of marks or throughput rates to success, or a simple correlation of attendance with class scores have obvious flaws, trivalising important aspects related to learning. With the critical realist approach there is an

acknowledgement of the complexity involved in educational situations, of multiple influences and of the processes involved that make determining causality difficult.

2.4 Mechanisms and Structures in Critical Realism

The objects of knowledge for critical realists are not events, or activities, nor experiences, but rather the mechanisms and structures that generate or bring these into being. Bhaskar maintains that transcendental realism "...regards the objects of knowledge as the structures and mechanisms that generate phenomena; and the knowledge as produced in the social activity of science. These objects are neither phenomena (empiricism) nor human constructs imposed upon phenomena (idealism), but real structures which endure and operate independently of our knowledge, our experience and the conditions which allow us access to them." (in Archer et al., 1998 p.19). As such mechanisms and structures are independent of the phenomena, and of our experience of them. Each has properties and propensities which could be activated, although seldom do they operate in isolation. More often mechanisms or structures act severally, forming a complex network of interactions.

When a number of mechanisms work together and produce a new phenomenon this is referred to as emergence and is another fundamental concept within critical realism. Carter and New (2004 p. 14) note that:

Emergence refers to the way in which particular combinations of things, processes and practices in social life frequently give rise to new emergent properties. The defining characteristic of emergent properties is their irreducibility. They are more than the sum of their constituents, since they are a product of their combination, and as such are able to modify these constituents.

Whilst positivist science, through its experiments, seeks to isolate individual mechanisms there is also a need to try and investigate the webs of interactions. It is clear that whilst experiments can be useful in producing results artificially, their outcomes can only be seen as tendencies (Archer et al., 1998 p. xii – xiii), and there must be a seeking of how the tendencies play out across a range of areas outside of the experiment (transfactuality). The interaction of multiple mechanisms is however, particularly characteristic of educational situations where multiple influences operate, and where complex personal and interpersonal relationships have a direct impact on situations and individuals. Postgraduate processes and supervision would be an example of this. In reality mechanisms combine to generate variable outcomes and are "...rarely manifest and rarer still that they are empirically identified by men...They are not unknowable, although knowledge of them depends

upon a rare blending of intellectual, practico-technical and perceptual skills.” (Archer et al., 1998 p.34-5).

Mechanisms themselves may be operative or not, active or inactive at different times and this would see differences in outcomes. Thus there can be regularity, or consistency within the system but there is also allowance for change, innovation and transformation. This also, however, provides a clear reason why perceptions, interpretations and understandings are not entirely open, they are constrained by the structures and events that are indications of the existent reality and by the “*demi-regs*” that do occur. “So, while everything is ‘determined’, things are not *pre*-determined except where, as in experiments, conditions are artificially controlled. The chemical structure of gunpowder ‘determines’ its explosive causal powers, but whether it ever does explode is not thereby *pre*-determined” (Archer et al., 1998 p.130).

It is the human component of the social system that adds particularly to its dynamism and is the underlying issue in the whole debate around the primacy of structure or agency. Archer observes “...the intrinsic sources of openness, which ontologically preclude closure. To the realist, the one factor which guarantees that social systems remain open (and even forbids thought experiments about closure) is that they are necessarily peopled” (Archer et al., 1998 p.190).

Structures and mechanisms pre-exist individuals, who are born into particular situations, and enter into different social situations which are not of their making. In this way each person has available to them different resources, different opportunities and constraints. The fact that someone is born into an English speaking urban family with certain financial assets provides them with opportunities and possible constraints, which are different from those born into a Shona speaking, rural family who are subsistence farmers. There would also be different elements such as race and gender which would equally influence them, as well as location – are they born in Brazil, Scandanavia or Australia. These circumstances Archer claims are objective:

It starts with our involuntary placement as Primary Agents. At birth we are assigned to positions on society's distribution of resources, which means that we become members of *collectivities* who share the same life-chances. As such, the ‘I’, the subject of self-consciousness, discovers the ‘Me’ as the object of society, who is involuntarily either privileged or non-privileged. Such positions are entirely objective, but their transformation depends partly upon the subjective reflexivity of Primary Agents in seeking to play an active part in the re-shaping of society's resource distribution. In large part, their success depends upon their capacity to realise collective action and to transform themselves into Corporate Agents (Archer, 2000 p.11).

This insistence on the pre-existence of social structures is a fundamental tenet of critical realism, and underpins the way change or reproduction of society continues. Bhaskar maintains that there is a need to examine what exists before, in order to be able to investigate a context which is important in shaping present and future activities. He makes the point that people do not create society, only transform it or reproduce it “Social structure....is always already made” (Bhaskar quoted by Archer in Archer et al., 1998 p.359). An academic therefore, is part of an environment which pre-exists them consisting of the processes, knowledge and procedures used by the particular discipline they belong to, as well as the traditions, policies and practices of particular institutions and of higher education more broadly. They find themselves as part of disciplines, schools, faculties, institutions, national and international systems of higher education. Willmott claims “Bureaucracies, schools and universities are emergent relational entities and therefore exist at a different level from that of human agency” (Willmott, 1999 p.19). Thus there are layers and levels which affect individual practices in a variety of ways.

Academics teaching at postgraduate levels participate in practices particular to their disciplines, shaped by their institutions, by national imperatives, as well as by international dimensions and understandings of postgraduate practices. How far individuals are aware of these possibilities or limitations will vary. Some aspects are quite clear, others are more implicit. So the move to ensure that all supervisors have PhDs before they supervise will manifest in most institutions because of national policy, how they proceed and how they inform and deal with staff will vary from institution to institution. One may send official letters, as in the earlier example, another might put in place developmental programmes and encourage their staff who are currently engaged but ‘underqualified’ to work for qualification but allowing them to continue with their work. In some instances, a process of co-supervision may be used to mentor those less qualified, allowing them to gain certification, whilst also using their expertise.

2.5 Ontological Depth

By conceptualising the interaction between reality, society and humans as a differentiated and open system Bhaskar (1989) moves away from a uni-dimensional and dichotomous understanding of the world, to one which is multifaceted, evolutionary and complex. As a consequence the aspects of intransitivity, of transfactuality and of stratification become vital in providing an ontological depth.

2.5.1 Intransitivity

As indicated above Bhaskar shares with other realists the notion of a reality that exists separately of individuals, of society and of knowledge about it. As such the real is enduring or, in the case of social structures, relatively enduring. It continues to exist whether or not it is known about, seen or understood. It is because of this that science is possible, it is the search for the mechanisms and structures which are “real” that is the task of science and is only possible because these are enduring.

2.5.2 Transfactuality

When considering reality, science, through experiments, establishes natural laws. However, critical realists maintain that such laws need to hold extra-experimentally, ie: outside of the artificially induced environment. For this reason Bhaskar maintains that they need to be styled as powers or tendencies, since they can also exist unexercised, unperceived – which constitutes what he calls horizontal realism, whilst vertical reality, is part of the experimental discovery process. He explains it thus:

The laws of nature operate independently of the closure or otherwise of the systems in which they occur, and the domain of the real is distinct from and greater than the domain of the actual (and hence the empirical too). Failure to appreciate this results in the fallacy of actualism collapsing and homogenising reality (Bhaskar in Archer et al., 1998 p. xii).

As powers and potentialities these are available, whether observed or not, or whether actualised or not. They are, in the social context, relatively enduring. Several of them may interact to produce a particular pattern of events.

2.5.3 Stratification

With the separation of the structures and mechanisms from their manifestations or patterns of events, and from actual experience, the concept of ontological stratification has been developed which both contributes to social complexity, but also allows for the investigation of that complexity. Such a fundamental division is a key underpinning of critical realism, and is one of the essential aspects of differentiation which enables researchers to work their way towards an understanding of reality. Bhaskar posits three ontological levels, that of the empirical – this equates to observation or experience, perhaps the most superficial of all levels. The next level is that of the actual – this level is that of events and how they relate to one another. Finally, there is the level of the real, that of the structures and mechanisms. These are illustrated in table 1 below:

Table 1: Ontological Stratification

	Domain of the real	Domain of Actual	Domain of Empirical
Mechanisms	X		
Events	X	X	
Experiences	X	X	X

(table adapted from Bhaskar in Archer, 1998 p.41)

Each level builds on the level below it, but cannot be reduced to it, such stratification enables each one to be examined, and for the interface between the different levels to be causal connections. However, the levels are not normally in phase with each other, which introduces a temporal element into the analysis, and emphasizes the non-conjoined nature of events, and indeed they may even be in opposition to the phenomena that they generate (Bhaskar 1991 cited in Özel, 2002 p. 3). Other critical realists take the notion of stratification further. Brante (2001a) for example compares the development of different levels to the way science divided disciplines up and then further into sub disciplines:

I would suggest that we, analogous to natural science, attempt a level division of the general object of knowledge of sociology. Just like natural scientists have successfully carved up the “seamless web” of nature into fruitful areas of study, social scientists should try to increase and sharpen their focus by cutting up the “seamless web” of society according to its building blocks (Brante, 2001a p.177).

Indeed Brante develops a matrix which shows a variety of levels, which provides further insight relating the levels not only through the mechanisms but also to other broad macro, meso and micro issues. Each level is seen to have its own entities and mechanisms which are not reducible. He works through each of the levels, justifying this expanded level hierarchy. He points out that sociologists already study these relatively autonomous levels identifying mechanisms which indicate causal relationships.

Table 2: Brante's ontological levels.

	Social relation	Cultural scheme	Actor	
International				Nations, multinationals Transnational organisations
Interinstitutional				Institutions & organisations
Institutional				Status roles, social roles, positions in networks
Interindividual				Relations betw people, f2f
Individual				experiences

(table adapted from Brante, 2001a)

However some mechanisms may work between different levels. Within a level, particular methods may be suitable to exploring the mechanisms whilst also proving useful at other levels. Similarly broad issues such as power, gender, illness and others can be explored at several different levels, thus something like postgraduate teaching or supervision could be studied at different levels with different mechanisms being identified as having causal relationships.

Danermark et al (2002) would concur with Brante, and have a similar way of working with the idea of levels. She and her colleagues claim that the existence of "level specific mechanisms" are what constitutes a level with the lower levels in the hierarchy creating conditions for but not determining the higher levels. They outline four different levels, the lowest being that of physical and chemical mechanisms, then the natural mechanisms, cognitive and emotional mechanisms to the social mechanisms. The four levels are:

- Social sciences
- Psychological sciences
- Biological sciences
- Molecular sciences

(Danermark et al., 2002 p.4)

The use of stratification, and the interactions within and between the different levels certainly allows for complexity to be explored and is necessary for the separation of structure from agency, of social from individual which enables the interface between such elements to be examined.

2.6 Structure and Agency

The differentiated and stratified nature of the critical realist ontology means that it is now possible to engage with the core sociological issue, that of how humans operate within society. Carter and Sealy describe this issue:

The sociolinguistic enterprise raises fundamental questions about the nature of the relationships between social (such as social class and gender) and linguistic variation, while within social theory a persistent concern is the nature of the relationship between structure and agency (Carter & Sealey, 2000 p. 3).

This relationship is really about how the different aspects interact, and whether all life and activity is predetermined, or whether individuals have free will and can make personal choices, taking action which is meaningful and effective, or if there is another way. This embodies the determinism and voluntarism debates that have permeated sociological endeavours, and which have also engaged critical realists. It is reflective of the paradigm debates, in that positivism in its seeking to uncover universal laws which can predict future behaviour clearly espouses a deterministic or structural framework. Archer (1982) describes such views as those outlined and expanded on by Durkheim, as an oversocialised view of humans who owe everything, other than the biological aspect, to society. They are completely shaped by society and do not have the power to transform it. In contrast, hermeneutic approaches such as those articulated by Weber, with their emphasis on prioritising meaning, understanding and individual perceptions and experiences challenge the structural, espousing instead a voluntaristic frame. This Archer terms an undersocialised view of man where little is owed to the social conditions (Archer, 1982 p.11). She provides a succinct outline of the process:

The fundamental problem of linking human agency and social structure stalks through the history of social theory. Basically it concerns how to do an adequate theoretical account which deals simultaneously with men constituting society and the social formation of human agents. For any theorist, except the holist, social structure is ultimately a human product, but for any theorist except the advocates of psychologism, this product in turn shapes individuals and influences their interaction. However, successive theoretical developments have tilted either towards structure or towards action, a slippage which has gathered momentum over time (Archer, 1982 p. 455).

It is this tilting that the critical realists have grappled with and attempted to come to some resolution over. The separation of the two, structure and agency is important in this as Willmott (1999 p.8) indicates in relation to teachers:

However, given the indubitable fact that structure places limits on what teachers can do, surely structure has an ontological status apart from that of agency and can thus properly be conceptualised as an emergent level or stratum?

2.7 Transformational Model of Social Activity

Bhaskar in his efforts to overcome the dichotomous nature of the determinism versus voluntarism debate developed a model which he entitled the Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA). There are some theorists who have tried a more synthesized approach such as that of Anthony Giddens, and Bhaskar points to the work of Peter Berger (Bhaskar in Archer et al., 1998 p. 212-213). Bhaskar highlights the difficulties of the dilemma, that society already exists, humans are born into a ready-made structural environment, yet society itself is only constituted and maintained through human activities. Humans therefore do not “make” society afresh, but rather interact with what exists and may change it (probably consciously) or reproduce it (generally unconsciously). What he points particularly to is the human characteristic of intentionality, that humans can purposefully instigate actions, monitor, control, and reflect on actions. He claims:

Society, then, provides necessary conditions for intentional human action, and intentional human action is a necessary condition for it. Society is only present in human action, but human action always expresses and utilizes some or other social form. Neither can, however, be identified with, reduced to, explained in terms of, or reconstructed from the other (Bhaskar in Archer et al., 1998 p.217).

Out of these deliberations Bhaskar developed his transformational model so that society and individuals are maintained as separate entities, but the interaction between the two of them can be examined.

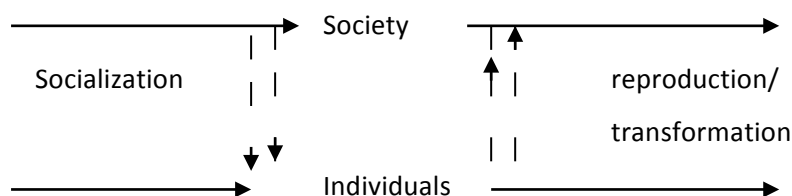


Figure 1 Model IV The transformational model of the society-person connection (Archer et al., 1998 p.217)

He sees the reasons, intentions and plans of people which lead to activities as psychological, whilst the structures which influence activity are social, thus enabling the development of the different levels that various researchers such as Danermark identify (Danermark et al., 2002, Brante, 2001a). This separation is the key to the model, and to explain this, the example that Bhaskar provides is of the difference between the reason for garbage being collected and the reason garbage collectors as individuals collect garbage. In this study it might be the reason for postgraduate supervision and the reason supervisors as individuals engage in supervision.

2.8 Morphogenesis

Margaret Archer through her several works (Archer, 1982, 1995, 2000) explores and expands these different aspects. In particular she is strongly critical of what she terms the fallacy of conflation. She refers to the deterministic approaches of theorists such as Durkheim, Marx and others as downward conflation with individuals becoming an epiphenomenon of structures (parts dominate the people), and to those of the voluntaristic beliefs embodied in the work of Weber as upward conflation, with structures becoming the epiphenomenon of individuals and groups (people dominate the parts). In both these instances the epiphenomenon is seen as inert, exerting little or no influence on processes. She also engages with those who try to find a middle ground, and in particular Giddens's notion of structuration in which he describes structure and agency as two sides of the same coin. Archer is quite clear that this central conflation as she terms it, is as problematic as the other two. By eliding the two elements into a single entity it makes it impossible to examine the relationship between the two. It is only by keeping them separate that it is possible for researchers to examine what each contributes to the process, it is why critical realists particularly insist on non-reductionism.

However, whilst critical realism to this point begins to provide a strong philosophical underpinning for research, it offers little to help a researcher practically. It is here that Archer's extension of Bhaskar's TMSA model becomes helpful. She feels that the TMSA, despite its claims, does not really differentiate between or explain sufficiently the society agency interface. This weakens the explanation of how change happens. Drawing on the work of Lockwood (1964) and the TMSA she posits instead her model of morphogenesis which seeks to articulate those moments of change or reproduction and how they occur in the system. Through her model she indicates how researchers might take into consideration the temporal and historical elements, the activities of individuals and groups, as well as the moments of emergence. Willmott (1999 p.13) notes: "The analytical rigour

that is inherent within an emergentist ontology is precisely the capacity to pinpoint possibilities for change. Rather truistically, there are contextual limits to change, but change is possible depending upon, *inter alia*, the mutability of the extant structure concerned.”

In developing her model she also makes a further differentiation, which can prove helpful, that of structure and agency, and of culture and agency. Archer claims that issues of culture have been largely ignored by sociologists (Archer, 1988), but that as a system it mirrors that of structure and forms a parallel process. It is important, however, to see them as different elements, and this then enables researchers to explore specific aspects, and to see the layered complexity of the social. It allows for not only an exploration of broad social structure, but for the more specific cultural influences to be examined. Her models most specifically include the role of time within the process, something which Bhaskar claims for his TMSA model but does not explore in any great depth.

...because structure and agency are phased over different tracts of time [which allows researchers] to formulate practical social theories in terms of the former being prior to the latter, having autonomy from it and exerting a causal influence upon it (Archer, 1996 p.694).

Archer’s model works through a number of phases. At the point T¹ it is necessary to examine the historical context of a situation, to take into account the constraints and the opportunities which a particular context provides, how things came to be and how they are currently. It is easy to see how this could occur at a variety of levels from international, to extremely local and specific. Willmott notes that “Pupils, lecturers, teachers, students enter complex educational systems which are anterior; they are the results of complex past interaction” (Willmott, 1999 p.15 – 16). In Higher Education it could be the international pressures shaping the sector, it could be national imperatives which shape local systems, as well as both particular institutional and disciplinary influences all affecting activities within the system. At this point the interests of different groups that affect a situation or system are identified. This is the pre-existing space individuals and groups enter and which they can then make choices from within the available range of alternatives.

T² to T³ calls for an analysis of the activities of individuals and groups or collectives as they respond and make choices from the possible alternatives that the situations provide for them. These are seen as enablements or constraints in terms of the activities undertaken, and are also seen in relation to the resources available. Thus what do supervisors actually do, what are the activities that faculties undertake in the postgraduate arenas are the issues to examine. What is important, and which

Archer's models enable us to do, is to ascertain when the situations are more enabling or more constraining.

T⁴ then is the elaboration or reproduction of the system often reflecting the unintended outcomes of earlier actions. This becomes the moment of change or stasis, and also the beginning of the next T¹ phase since this forms the context for future actions. Whilst the diagram of the model below appears linear in nature, it seems that the description of the process is more truly cyclical.

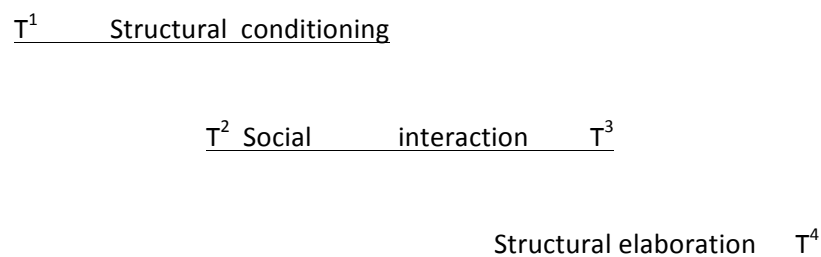


Figure 2 The Morphogenesis of Structure (Archer 1995)

Whilst much of the focus is on structure and agency, Archer (1988) in particular recognises that the culture and agency interaction impacts in a different way on the process, and that this provides yet another layer which needs to be theorized, understood and explored. In her book on Culture and Agency: the place of culture in social theory she explores the issues related to culture and society, and how these interface, influencing activities, change and stasis in very particular ways. In the same way that it is necessary to be able to examine the way agents and structure interact to effect change or preserve the status quo so it is necessary to examine the agent culture interface. Archer (1988 p. xvi) summarises the issues for culture thus:

By utilizing this common framework it becomes easier to see *how* structure and culture intersect in the middle element of their respective morphogenetic cycles: through structural-interest groups endorsing some corpus of ideas in order to advance their material concerns but then becoming enmeshed in the situational logic of that part of the cultural domain; and through ideal-interest groups seeking powerful sponsors *to promote* their ideas but then immediately embroiling cultural discourse in power-play within the structural domain. Using the same conceptual framework thus enables one to pinpoint the mechanics of the inter-penetration between structure and culture... **If** structural and cultural dynamics are both conceptualized in terms of morphogenetic/ morphostatic cycles, it becomes possible to theorize about their influence on one another by examining how the cycles proper to each can mesh together in various ways and with varying consequences.

For this reason then the cultural morphogenetic model mirrors that of the structural one, which both allows for comparison, and assists the researcher by providing a starting point for operationalising research issues in terms of the framework.

T¹ Cultural conditioning

T² Socio-cultural interaction T³

Cultural elaboration T⁴

Figure 3 The Morphogenesis of Culture (Archer 1995)

This is the first stage of a helpful structure to assist researchers engage with social issues from a critical realist standpoint. The “tool kit” which Archer develops in her study on Culture and Agency (Archer, 1988 p.xii) provides further insight into an analytical framework.

In exploring understandings of how culture and society work, Archer indicates that the usual notion of culture being the shared norms, beliefs and values of an identifiable group of people is more mythical than actual (Archer 1988). Rather than being a coherent, and shared system, culture may be more or less shared, and could indeed encompass challenges between ideas and beliefs. Different responses within a system and from other levels may be created by different degrees of integration and/or contradiction. The greater the shared notions the greater the degree of integration, the more contradictory or fragmented the ideas and beliefs are the greater the disharmony. By working with the notion of levels and systems Archer (1988) outlines a process which, given different relationships between various elements of the system, it becomes possible to map out processes and the points of interaction between the different levels.

Archer (1988) posits two kinds of relations, logical relations, and causal relations. The logical relations pertain between and within the components of systems, these being the cultural system (CS) and/or the structural system (SS). These exert a causal influence on the socio-cultural (S-C) aspects or situational interaction (SI) which relate to the interaction of individuals and groups. At the interpersonal socio-cultural level, causal relations occur between individuals and groups. By examining the kinds of potential relationships both within and between the different elements it is possible to begin to identify points of change and likelihood of stasis. This is related to the degrees of consistency or complementarity within the system, and when this is matched by high consensus

between people in the socio-cultural arena, then it is more likely that the status quo will be maintained. There is a high degree of integration in the system. When, however, there are moments of contest, competition or contradiction other possibilities surface, and depending on the responses either change or stasis can be the outcome. Archer (1988) indicates that part of the process entails seeing how complementary or contradictory relations within the cultural system map onto those of the socio-cultural, how they affect the relationships between people. Generally, complementary relations create a safe and consensual environment, whilst contradictory ones pose a problem-ridden situation which must be confronted by actors. If they recognise the inconsistencies they can then make choices from a variety of possibilities, their actions are not pre-determined. There may be occasions, however, when the system may reflect one thing, for example contradictions, but the outcome is quite the opposite. Unless the contradictions are actualised or reflected by social groups they could be contained and even quashed. It is possible for some structures to be resisted by some groups, and embraced by others. Willmott (1999 p.9) illustrates this in his discussion of students and teachers:

...for stringent conditioning is fundamentally not deterministic, for pupils, like teachers, resist. Such resistance, however, carries a structured penalty – for teachers in the form of disciplinary hearings and possible dismissal, and for the pupils, the possibility of formal expulsion. Such structured penalties inhere within, and are only possible on the basis of, social relations (teacher pupil/ headteacher teacher) they do not inhere within the properties of the individuals concerned.

Thus the process can be quite complex. The model is illustrated in the figure below:

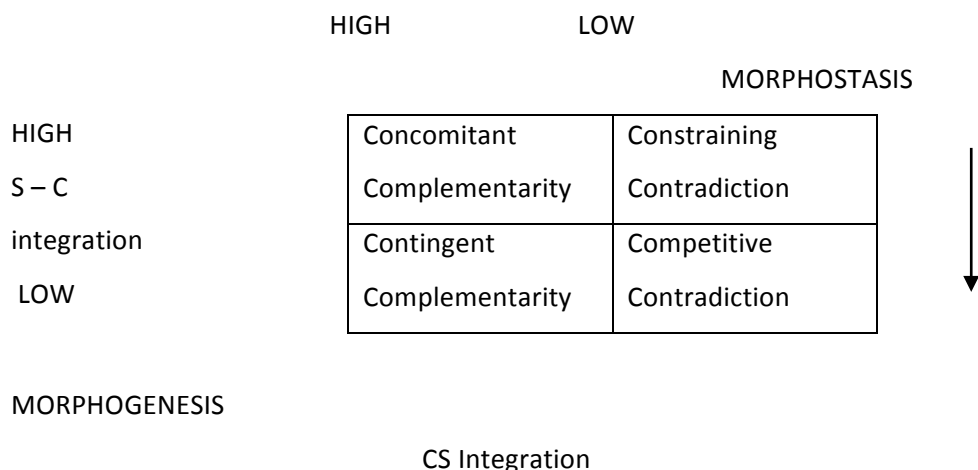


Figure 4: Conceptualising cultural dynamics. (Archer, 1988 p.225)

What the models do is to allow for structure, culture and agency to exist as definable and different entities yet which are still closely intertwined. One useful comparison which helps to explain this is the comparison to water, where oxygen and hydrogen in combination become a different substance, water. Individually each substance has particular characteristics, yet in combination their form becomes something quite different with different characteristics. The whole is greater than, and different from, the parts that make it up. Each part nevertheless, has a separate and different existence.

Whilst most reviewers and critics recognise the valuable contribution that the cumulative work of Archer makes in the area of sociology and in particular in addressing the difficulties of structure and agency, indicating that it affords an impressive and significant leap forward which is rigorous in its unfolding, they nevertheless raise some concerns (Little, 2014; Lopez, 2009; Zeuner, 1999). They pose questions in relation to these concerns and what they might mean for the theory. Zeuner (1999) specifically raises issues related to the efficacy of Archer's primary tool, that of analytic dualism. Drawing attention to the fact that Archer selects aspects from very diverse sources to inform her development of analytic dualism (Lockwood's notions of functionalism and conflict theory), and something very different to shape ideas of morphogenesis (Buckley's systems thinking) Zeuner indicates that perhaps because of the very methodical and ordered nature of the morphogenetic process, system thinking dominates. This has a tendency to make agency part of the social system and thus conflicts with the notion of analytic dualism: "Over time, however, Archer has let morphogenetic thinking and thereby the systems theoretical approach dominates in relation to the interactionist approach. In her theory, agency in itself becomes a morphogenetic cycle. It becomes a part of the social system " (Zeuner, 1999 p. 83).

In a similar vein, Zeuner feels that Archer's engagement with Popper's ideas of the mediation of the physical world and the objective world of ideas by the mental world, is problematic. Although the role of the mental world is acknowledged, it is nevertheless largely absent from Archer's theorising about culture. Given that Archer then allows agency to interface with both structure and culture in similar ways raises deep concerns for Zeuner. Archer allows the mechanisms which apply to the structural world to apply to the cultural world in like fashion, therefore suggesting the cultural domain, like the structural one, is determined by material and vested interests. Thus Zeuner claims the cultural is subsumed by the structural negating its separation. These are strong claims and worthy of serious consideration, however it needs to be borne in mind that Archer was outlining a process that might be applied to each aspect, and that in her outlining of the different elements she

remains clear and constant in her separation of each. She also notes that this is an artificial divide for exploratory convenience, devices need to be separated from the theory.

It would seem that Little (2014) has concerns related to implementation. He indicates that in Critical Realism structures, rules and organisations are malleable and that through the pushes and pulling of actors they are subject to change. He notes that within systems where there are high levels of integration change is more difficult to effect, whilst in those where contradictions have become apparent and may be increasing there is likely to be shifts. Yet he notes that ways to explore how change happens, and in particular the process for the establishment of a new system of integration and what he terms “mutual regulation” are not particularly clear. He suggests that the work of Lazar might offer some clarity. Through what Lazar has indicated is a neo-structural method, by engaging multilevel network analysis there might be some progress. He explores through his work how actors move beyond institutional boundaries to form new networks which offer a variety of possibilities.

Whilst there might be some concerns it becomes clear from these reviews that Archer’s work is considered important in taking sociology forward. Whilst there may still be issues with the emerging theories and processes they are nevertheless powerful tools in exploring the social, cultural and individual.

Thus Archer (1988; 1995) provides a useful framework from which to begin analysing various educational activities such as postgraduate studies. By examining the contexts within which different activities occur, and then exploring exactly what occurs in exchanges within such activities as supervisions it may become possible to identify potential change scenarios. Since Higher Education is in a state of flux it may be easier to note inconsistencies and contradictions.

2.9 Roles and Practices

Whilst the differentiation of structure and agency allows researchers to see that each element has properties and powers of their own, having separated them, it becomes important to examine then how they interact. Archer notes that many theorists, including Giddens, take the stance of “this society because of those people here present and the concepts they hold” (Archer in Archer et al 1998 p.366). This is related to the notion that society exists only in and through the activities of people, and can only be changed through human activity. Bhaskar however, moves beyond this to examining not the individuals in society but the relations between individuals, groups and entities

and towards recognising the temporal nature of development. The espousal of the notion of emergence allows for this, and is vital to the inclusion of time into the process. Thus it becomes possible to see that society is in actuality pre-existing and that people enter into the society and either continue within the structures, or through actions and activities work towards change. Archer expands on this:

That force [past actions] is the force of emergence, namely that it is now perfectly possible to talk about emergent properties and the results (or the results of the results) of past actions, which pre-date all current actions of contemporary agents and yet condition them – in the form of enablements or constraints which are not dependent upon current activities nor influential because of their contemporary conceptualisation.... (Archer et al., 1998 p. 367-8).

Because of this it is possible for these two elements, structure and agency, to be out of synchronicity with each other. The fact that society is the condition for activity, as well as being continually reproduced through that activity, which may be productive and reproductive makes this an important necessity and is seen by Bhaskar as the 'duality of praxis'. Research then, should explore how these two aspects inter-relate, and this is known as analytic dualism. Since actors do not create, nor are responsible for, the distribution of resources, roles and interests which affect them it is the interplay between these circumstances, and the actions and activities of people which may affect the former that is important. Recognising the problem Bhaskar indicates the need for a mediating process.

... 'we need a system of mediating concepts, encompassing both aspects of the duality of praxis, designating the "slots", as it were, in the social structure into which active agents must slip in order to reproduce it; that is a system of concepts designating the "point of contact" between human agency and social structure. Such a point, linking action to structure, must both endure and be immediately occupied by individuals (Bhaskar quoted in Archer et al., 1998 p. 391).

As such the "slots" are positions, that is roles, functions, duties and rights which pre-exist individuals and groups, but which they fill and bring their own powers and interests to. There are also practices which emerge as a result of the positions. This Archer calls the position-practice system. Quinn (2006 p. 44) notes that:

Roles are necessarily and internally related to other roles (for example, teacher/pupil; doctor/patient) and associated with material requirements such as equipment, trained personnel, hospitals and pharmaceuticals: 'the distinction between the 'systemic' and the 'social' is the difference between roles and their occupants" (ibid: 186). Roles are relatively autonomous as there can be many different incumbents of the roles who have different characteristics (role re-definition and personal development happen during double morphogenesis, ..).

Thus the roles pre-exist the incumbents, and incumbents bring their own strengths and weaknesses to those roles. Quinn (2006 p.54) notes: "Actors endow the roles with their own ideals, skills, knowledge and values". Once again social realists look to examining the properties that belong to the roles, and to differentiating these from the properties of the incumbents of those roles. Each have their own emergent properties. With each new incumbent the role is modified, and in the process the incumbent themselves is transformed. Thus the role of supervisor is pre-existent within the academic context, with a variety of functions and practices already attached to it. It is part of a dyadic relationship with a student, but also has a relationship with the discipline, and with the institution. Each supervisor fills the role in slightly different ways. In this study I will be examining the roles, and some individuals who fill those roles and their situations. It will be an exploration of how supervision itself is affected by individuals but also by the situations and contexts and how practices as well as the individuals are constrained or facilitated by different elements of the environment.

Since the study is primarily focused on individuals and their experiences of particular academic situations and roles it will be necessary to explore the issues related to individuals and how they come to terms with their situations. Archer notes that most social theorising has focused on how structural and cultural powers influence and affect agents, but very little on how agents " use their own personal powers to act 'so rather than otherwise', in such situations" (Archer, 2003 p.3). Indeed, whilst the structural and cultural power is important without agents and action such powers and potentialities remain unrealised and unexercised. For this reason it is important to begin to unpack agency and to explore these mediatory processes. Archer outlines this:

I maintain that realist social theory has adequately conceptualised how structural and cultural emergent properties impinge upon us; namely by shaping the situations in which we find ourselves, such that they have the capacity to operate *inter alia* as constraints and enablements. However, their powers as constraints and enablements require activation by agents. They only become causally efficacious in relation to individuals' concerns in and about society - and what they seek to do to realise them. Yet, all of this presumes the active agent with his or her own distinctive properties and powers. ...what had still been ignored was *how* agents, by virtue of their powers of reflexivity, deliberate about their social circumstances in relation to their personal concerns. Yet, this is the final link in **the process through which structure is mediated by agency**. I have ventured that the 'how' question is answered by reference to the 'internal conversations' conducted by all normal agents (Archer, nd).

Group elaboration

T4

(increase of Corporate Agents)

Figure 5 The morphogenesis of corporate agency (Archer, 2000 p. 268)

Research by Mary Henkel (2000) which explores academic identities is particularly pertinent to this study. By exploring how the new policy environment is affecting academics, and their view of themselves and their practices in relation to these changes, her work directly reflects on this study which is examining one particular role that academics take on at a specific time in their lives when their professional environment is undergoing rapid change. She examines how the ideas about identity have changed, moving from the idea of a fixed or static identity, to a more fluid notion of identity which might take into account the way new roles, experiences and situations impact on identity in a process of constant creation and recreation. Henkel (2000 p.14) sees that the idea of identity should be seen as:

...a sense of self not as essence but as a project. 'In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems' (Giddens 1991, p.5). This formulation incorporates both the future orientation of the project and its continuity with the past, the notion that every person has their own narrative history, which they can construct for themselves and present to others as a coherent account of a whole human life.

The issue of reflexivity is an important point, since it is through reflexivity that individuals move beyond simply being a pawn in a greater social and natural world. Rather than being governed entirely by things beyond their control, whether this be circumstance, nature or language, humans are afforded a degree of control within their own lives through the choices they make. It is this particular interface that Margaret Archer is also concerned with. As Archer (2003) points out one might be born or enter into a particular situation which pre-dates one, and have a certain set of attributes but there are possibilities which the individual can then work with, making choices both consciously and unconsciously to influence the course of their lives. Possibilities and resources may act as constraints or facilitators. These moments or potentialities are the generative moments, which may be actualized or remain unactualized, and which may have greater or lesser effect in the

broader ambit of social life. She too underscores the reflexive nature of individuals. Bonny Norton Pierce exploring the way language and identity are interconnected similarly subscribes to this notion, that identities have to be understood in relation to the social structures they operate within, critical realists would examine the roles and relationships entered into (Norton Peirce, 1995, 2000). Within particular contexts individuals have access to a range of resources and opportunities, which can prevent or facilitate a variety of shifts, of connections, and of possible networks that can be engaged in. "A person's identity construction cannot be separated from the distribution of resources in society because it is a personal access to resources that defines the terms on which desires and their realization will be articulated..." (Potowski, 2001).

Henkel (2000) explores the notion of community and the role that various communities that an individual belongs to play in the shaping of identity. She outlines how different academic communities affect the way academic identities are formed, for example the discipline, perhaps the department, faculty, and institution all affect staff in different ways. She also explores through her book the different roles or functions performed by academics and how these contribute to identities, such as research, teaching and academic administration. Within these however, are other lesser roles such as assessor, advisor, examiner and supervisor which are not examined, and which this PhD study wishes to explore, in particular how individuals develop as supervisors and how this reflects their academic identity. It may be interesting to explore how far supervisors see their actions as shaped by the requirements of the discipline, the institution or by themselves or indeed, how and why they choose to be particular kinds of supervisors and how this reflects their own sense of academia. Dahan (2007) notes that given the changing nature and outcomes for postgraduate supervision there is a challenge to the identity of supervisors. "There is thus a paradox: how can supervisors change their vision of themselves from that of intellectual guides training future peers to trainers of a 'professional' in an undefined (but presumably 'non-academic career')?" (Dahan, 2007 p. 335). Drawing on a model developed by Pratt et al (2006) he explores how supervisors are coming to terms with changes.

Whilst one examines how different functions impact on individuals, less explored is the way individuals shape the activities, something which Henkel (2000 p.22) alludes to in passing:

In this book, we have therefore taken the discipline and the enterprise, or the higher education institution, as the main institutions or communities within which academics construct their identities, their values, the knowledge base of their work, their modes of working and their self-esteem. In making these choices and in centring the study on identity we are drawing on a tradition in higher

education literature that is strongly informed by idealism and essentialism. One of the risks of this kind of approach, as recently pointed out by Trowler (1998) in his insightful analysis of academic responses to policy change, is that the ideal can become confused with the reality. The reality of academic working lives is ignored and the influence of abstract epistemologies overemphasised. We would defend our approach and the choice of a perspective upon academic identity that relies heavily on a moral philosophical tradition by arguing that ideals and values and the inheritance of language and myth in which they are expressed constitute significance and motivation in academic working lives.

Through her study Henkel indicates the number of tensions and pressures that confront individuals in the changing higher education environment, with new policies generating new tensions. This exchange between the micro and macro levels within the sector is important as it provides a nexus for change or stasis. It is also interesting to see the differences that develop between different generations of staff within an institution given the different understandings they might have, thus academics of the 1960s and 1970s may have one understanding and be responding to particular pressures, whilst those of the 1980s and 1990s may face others.

As noted by Henkel (2000) academic identity is largely rooted in the disciplines, which Becher and Trowler (2001) also reflect in their study. This is extended through the insightful work particularly of Bernstein (2000) and later in the work of Karl Maton (Maton, 2009, 2011) and which is discussed a little later. Henkel's study (2000) develops a description of academic identity related to idealist or essentialist conceptions of academia, based on ideas of self-regulation as the key to individual practice, a strong internal or individual control of their own activities. In terms of professional practice how does an individual work within/with the system, and how does this reflect on identity? The answer may lie in Archer's (2003) notion of the internal conversation, which can also provide interesting reflections on how practices themselves change or develop on the basis of individual practices. Through a reflexive process, Archer (2003 p. 103) posits the internal conversation as:

....commonly known as 'making up our minds' – from trivia like ascertaining today's date to decisions about our major commitments...we can do this through the inner conversation by formulating our thoughts and then inspecting and responding to these utterances, as subject to object. This process is itself the practice of reflexivity; it is how we do all those things like self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-commitment. Being reflexive is a human practice; ..Internal dialogue is the practice through which we 'make up our minds' by questioning ourselves, clarifying our beliefs and inclinations, diagnosing our situations, deliberating about our concerns and defining our own projects.

It is this mechanism that guides people to modify themselves, or the world itself, or to accept different constraints. It is this process through which social structure is mediated for the individual.

Scott (2000 p. 22) maintains that:

Identity, however, is not fixed in this way [by parentage etc]. It is a conjunction of dispositions, experiences, social constructions and so forth; and how someone understands themselves cannot be determined by a conceptual schema, however sophisticated. This is because, though that conceptual schema may be able to suggest that certain forms of life lead to certain choices being made, it cannot provide an adequate description of those factors which influence choices, as these may be indeterminate.

In her study Archer (2003) discovered that there were a number of forms of internal dialogue, communicative reflexivity, autonomous reflexivity and meta-reflexivity as well as fractured reflexivity, each contributing more or less to the degree of agency that actors embrace. These different forms indicate different ways of working within the world. As such these different ways of working or 'stances' as Archer (2003 p. 343) refers to them:

'Stances' are basic orientations of subjects to society. In other words, the 'stance' is ventured as a generative mechanism, at the personal level, with the tendential capacity to regulate relations between the person and her society. In short, they constitute the micro – macro link.

In part the way individuals signal their stance is through their actions but also through the discourses they engage. This does not mean to imply that a stance is a static concept, it may evolve over time, and may also be engaged and discussed in contradictory ways. The work of Norman Fairclough and others in the area of critical discourse analysis or CDA may be illuminating here. CDA is a way of exploring "...the ways in which and the extent to which social changes are changes in discourse and the relations between changes in discourse and the changes in other, non discursive, elements or moments of social life.." (Fairclough, 2006). This makes it appropriate for critical realist studies. Fairclough is clear that often discourses operate as what he calls "imaginaries" or how things might or could be, but that to become more structural they need to be enacted (Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2004).

CDA explores the ways in which textual properties such as vocabulary, metaphor and grammar amongst others, have an ideological function contributing to the development of taken-for-granted assumptions and practices. "The power to control discourse is seen as the power to sustain particular discursive practices with particular ideological investments in dominance over other alternative (including oppositional) practices" (Fairclough, 1995 p. 2). He makes the point that language is both representational, and therefore cognitive engaging the way we think about things,

as well as part of social interaction structuring the interplay between different social elements. In spaces of coherence and agreement language use may be relatively consistent, but in moments of change and opposition ambiguities and differences may arise. Fairclough articulates the role of discourse as:

...(a) the order of discourse is the social order in its discursive facet – or, the historical impress of sociocultural practice on discourse; (b) any discursive event necessarily positions itself in relation to this historical legacy, selectively reproducing or transforming it; (c) the specificity of the particular sociocultural practice which a discursive event is part of is realized first in how the discursive event draws upon and works upon the order of discourse, which in turn realized in features of texts, so that the text-sociocultural practice link is mediated by discursive practice. As this formulation implies, discourse practice ensures attention to the historicity of discursive events by showing both their continuity with the past (their dependence upon given orders of discourse) and their involvement in making history (their remaking of orders of discourse). (Fairclough, 1995 p. 10-11).

Practitioners of CDA recognise that social change exists not only in changing structures and processes, but that it also reflects through discursive practices. The particular example they use is of the force of economic discourse in new liberalism, the rise of management speak, and the way language positions the various players. There is less indicated about identity formation but language and language choice (using language in its broadest definition) is a central part of how individuals position themselves and others within their social milieu. So different social practices, and ideologies can be “talked into being” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999 p. 4). There is a constant caution however, not to drift into the epistemic fallacy:

It is important to recognise the social import of discourse without reducing the social life to discourse- a reductionism characteristic of the postmodern view of the social world that is a constant risk and temptation for discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999 p. 6).

This study seeks to discover how academics in their understandings of supervisory practices develop their own pedagogy for postgraduate level as well as how they respond to the contextual aspects. This, of course, is dependent on the identities that people have of themselves in their academic and professional capacities, as well as on the interactions between people themselves. They may choose to engage a range of different discourses to discuss various supervisory aspects, and these in relation to the contextual and historical aspects of situation may be illuminating. Through the interviews it is hoped that it will be possible to identify forms of internal dialogue that indicate how academics develop themselves and their practices within their professional environment.

Chapter Three: Mediating Structure and Culture

*The art of listening needs its highest development
In listening to oneself; our most important task is to develop
an ear that can really hear what we're saying.*
Sydney Harris

3.1 The Contextual Background

As supervisors work with their students, they face structures that have developed as part of the postgraduate sector, and work within the cultural beliefs and rituals that have developed over years. As changes filter through they need to deal with these, often individually. Similarly, they find themselves confronting the norms, rules and regulations that govern their profession and the various roles they engage in. It would be easy to believe that supervisors are governed by the system, and that in the face of the new challenges described earlier that they are passive recipients, victims of an increasingly oppressive process. Yet, it is clear that new practices are emerging, and that supervisors find coping mechanisms to deal with the new challenges. As Archer says they are not cultural dopes, nor structural dupes (Archer, 2003). So how do individuals operate within the system, what means of accommodation, resistance and change do they have? How do individual agendas also feature in the way they respond, how is agency exercised?

In choosing to work within a critical realist framework, it becomes important to explore the issue of the interaction between structure and agency, and to examine exactly how and why agency manifests in a world largely prestructured. It may be useful to explore the way agency is enacted in an environment, where individuals embrace enablements or work around constraints in a way that needs to be articulated. As outlined earlier both structure and culture only exist through the activities and processes initiated by human agents, without them such would not, and could not, exist. That structure and culture may take on a life of their own through temporal processes, separate from that of individual agents, does not negate the fundamental role played by people in maintaining and changing them. It does however mean that these forces are in certain ways more objective, whilst individuals as agents are a more subjective force. It is the interaction of the objective and the subjective that becomes of interest. What underpins the whole process, however, is that causality in the process is mediated by agency, only through the activities of individuals and

groups, is structure or culture instantiated. Archer identifies that the theorising of agency has been a weak point when exploring the whole issue of structure and agency, a key theme in sociology:

... the causal power of social forms 'is mediated through agency', but it does not tell us anything about the mediatory process involved. Obviously, the word 'through' requires unpacking before the process of mediation has begun to be conceptualised. ... this involves a specification of how structural and cultural powers impinge upon agents, and secondly of how agents use their own personal powers to act 'so rather than otherwise', in such situations. Realist socialist theorising, like much other social theory, has been almost exclusively preoccupied with the first problem, which is why it is considered to be incomplete as yet (Archer, 2003 p. 3).

Structure or culture and their effects on individuals have generally been explored in terms of the way they constrain or enable the activity of people. As Archer makes clear, this in itself implies agency, since the power to take up opportunities or enablements, or to be constrained already means that there is something to be enabled or hindered. Only by having projects or being able to plan and project actions can there be anything to constrain or enable, thus shaping the situation in which the project occurs. So, postgraduate supervision can be seen as one form of educational structure, within the system, and with traditions, roles and practices creating a cultural system related to the structure. These may be shaped by vested interests, whether these be international or national which consolidate through policy and practices into structures. Individuals engage with these in a number of different ways, as students, as supervisors or as examiners. It may be that through their activities, and approaches changes might be effected or the processes may be confirmed and consolidated. Each participant will have formulated different projects for themselves which may be enabled or constrained by the structures, or by the culture within that particular context that precedes their activities. Since each supervision occurs in a different context there will be different enablers, or different constraints in each situation, which will also be influenced by the participants given that individuals engaged in the process each have their own projects and priorities which will affect the process. The one element may be the supervisor, who proceeds through each supervision with their own emerging concerns and interests. Another element will be the student, whilst a third may be the discipline and/or institution. For the individual supervisor activities may be guided by their more encompassing professional or academic identity and projects that they take on as academics, seeing different elements of that taking on different priorities for them, be it disciplinary, research or student development. This may guide the way they interact with their environmental aspects.

The work done by Biesta and Tedder seems to build on the Archerian notions and they indicate that it is through this engagement with the particular contexts that individuals learn about their own notions of agency, and how that agency might be achieved. This they call an “ecological understanding of agency”:

We approach agency as something that is achieved through the active engagement of individuals with aspects of their contexts-for-action... one which focuses on the dynamic interplay of iterative projective and practical-evaluative dimensions, which takes into consideration how this interplay varies within different contexts-for-action, and which locates agency in the ability to shape our responsiveness to such context (Biesta & Tedder, 2007 p. 132-133).

3.2 Agency

So within the critical realist frame structure, culture and agency are seen as distinct strata of reality, with their own and different properties and powers. Since agency exists on a different level, the interaction between these different strata becomes possible and is important. This is an exploration then of how the more objective aspects in society – structure and culture affect or are affected by, subjectivity, or agency. This challenges the notions of determinism. Structure and culture only exist through the action and activity of people and their emergent properties are only activated through people and their projects. Therefore their causal power is contingent upon individual activation. Whilst it is tempting to see the forces of structure or culture to be determining, in most situations people who may have specific plans and projects find that certain elements either provide them with opportunities, or hinder them. The way that they interact with them therefore either reinforces the current structures and beliefs (morphostasis) or contributes to transforming them (morphogenesis) in some way. Much of this has already been outlined previously, but in this chapter I will explore the way agency operates. Archer maintains that:

...we are who we are because of what we care about: in delineating our ultimate concerns and accommodating our subordinate ones, we also define ourselves. We give a shape to our lives... (Archer, 2000 p. 10).

Structure and Culture embody potential causal powers through their emergent properties. Structure provides a distribution of roles, organisations and institutions within a society, whilst in the cultural arena propositions, theories or doctrines that hold sway, form the shaping environment. Through interaction and distribution of these, individuals operate within their social and cultural contexts. Archer, in particular, concentrates on exploring the interactions of individuals with the world in her book Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation (Archer, 2003). Here she explores how personal emergent properties (PEPs) arise for individuals and how they operate in relation to other

strata, in particular in relation to structure. In doing so she begins to articulate the way agency is embodied, and in this way helps to theorise the way that the emergent properties of either structure or culture impinge on people. It is only when people respond that the emergent properties of either structure or culture are activated, otherwise they continue only as potential.

Others concur with the idea that agency emerges in relationship with the structures and culture in various situations. This may shape not only what occurs – the agency that happens, it may also affect the development of identities and the learning process. Biesta and Tedder differentiate between engagement in a highly normative environment, and one which is more experiential, and maintain that depending on orientation this may colour our view of agency:

There is an important difference between 'normative' and 'empirical' interest in agency, particularly with reference to the relationship between agency, education and learning. Whereas in the normative approach the argument is that people need to receive education and need to learn in order to become (more) agentic, the empirical line suggests that modernisation forces people to be (more) agentic, which only then raises the question of what kind of learning is involved in and/or follows from living one's life under such conditions (Biesta & Tedder, 2007 p. 134).

Issues of agency and structure are fundamental to many sociological debates, and Archer has emerged as one of the key theorists in this area. Through her work on morphogenesis and more latterly on reflective practice and the inner conversation, she has developed a framework that allows for exploration of agency, of structure and culture, and ultimately of identity. Whilst her work contains definite indications of how this affects the individual it says less about how this reflects their evolving learning processes. Others have taken up these ideas, and further work has been done on the links between agency and identity, as well as agency and learning (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007; Warren & Fassett, 2002; Wheelahan, 2007a; Wojecki, 2007).

Pinning down what we mean by agency can be difficult and in general the concept remains rather ill-defined. However Biesta and Tedder (2007, p.134) explore the origins and development of the concept. "In social theory 'agency' is often defined as 'the capacity for autonomous social action' or 'the ability to operate independently of determining constraints of social structure' (see Calhoun, 2002). From a lifecourse perspective, we suggest to see agency as the ability to exert control over and give direction to one's life". Other researchers have also provided useful insight into how we might understand agency. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) outline agency as a three dimensional

process which brings together routine, as well as purpose with the action of judgement. Agency is the interaction between these three elements.

While routine, purpose, and judgment all constitute important dimensions of agency, none by itself captures its full complexity. Moreover, when one or another is conflated with agency itself, we lose a sense of the dynamic *interplay* among these dimensions and of how this interplay varies within different structural contexts of action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998 p. 963).

They introduce an element which is fundamental to Archer's conceptions of both morphogenesis and to agency, that of time. Agency is seen as being informed by the past, with an eye to the future outcomes and developments, but embedded within the present contexts. Thus they define agency as

...the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments - the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. This definition encompasses what we shall analytically distinguish below as the different constitutive elements of human agency: iteration, projectivity, and practical evaluation (ibid. p. 970).

Such a view supports the notion of active engagement with differing contexts and situations, and responses to various mechanisms as they manifest in different situations. It is suggestive of a link with identity which evolves in relation to these engagements. These various views indicate that agency can be seen as different from structure and culture, and strongly linked to identity.

In an earlier chapter I explored briefly the development of a continuous sense of self that occurs early for individuals, and from which individuals develop their understandings of and interactions with the world. The continuous sense of self enables individuals to think of themselves as not only distinct from others, but also from other elements in the material space, as distinct within a reality that consists of three orders, natural, practical and social. Building on this basic continuous sense is a more active process of developing a personal identity. Archer notes active engagements leads:

...to their active acquisition of a *personal identity* at maturity. Our selfhood is unique, but it can largely be constituted by the things that have happened to us. Certainly, it entails active interplay with the environment in which individuals find themselves, but it cannot be pro-active in selecting this environment. Personal identity, however, hinges precisely upon the emergence of a mature ability to take a reflective overview of the three orders of reality in which we are ineluctably engaged. Because of our constitution in relation to the constitution of the world, we cannot ignore any of these three orders with impunity: nevertheless, we can prioritise where our predominant concerns lie and accommodate our other concerns to them. It is the distinctive patterning of these

concerns which is held to give people their unique personal identities. ... Which precise balance we strike, and what exactly features as our ultimate concerns is what gives us our strict identity as particular persons -our personal identity (Archer, 2003 p. 9-10).

It is the ability for reflection that is seen as key to the operation of agency. It is through reflection that an individual begins to outline their situation and the issues at stake, identify their interests, what matters to them, and to prioritise these. On the basis of this they can design or plan, and strategise. In this process they identify aspects that might facilitate or hinder the process. This seems a neat process, however because our knowledge, even of ourselves, is fallible. There are always areas in which we can be wrong or limited. So that the situation might be misunderstood, interest might be mistaken and in the design or strategy we could misjudge possible outcomes, or anticipated consequences. We may not fully understand or be aware of forces that shape our context – in the instance of higher education and supervision the larger international forces at play which may be influencing the sector might not be obvious to individuals engaging with their students. This carries with it a price for the individual. Nevertheless, through the individual response the emergent causal powers are mediated, rather than simply being an imposition. The notion of projects, or concerns, is important because it is from the configuration of concerns, and how we believe that we can go about achieving these, that our personal identities are defined. In particular, in relation to personal identities the emergence of 'ultimate concerns' is important. Through reflection individuals monitor, respond to, adjust and prioritise concerns. Three stages are identified in this process, discernment, deliberation and dedication and this can only occur through reflexivity which it is maintained, everyone is capable of. It is the process of reflection and deliberation that allows individuals to come to an understanding of themselves, self-knowledge, about what to do, say and think. For postgraduate students this may be whether they are interested in self-development, the excitement of their project, getting a qualification or developing research skills, for supervisors what they see as the most important aspect of the process would be the guiding interest, getting X number of students through (throughput and to beef up their CVs), or about their research, developing their discipline or about developing students. Even these might work within the domain of larger more general concerns such as academic identity. These interests then work out in different patterns of commitment for each individual, and guide the way in which they encounter the different structural or cultural elements.

3.3 Inner Conversation

The key to this process of deliberation and monitoring is reflection, a process of internal dialogue, or inner conversation that allows us to explore and prioritise our 'ultimate concerns'. Archer shows that without this inner, and private process, ie: inaccessible to others, what she calls a 'first-person' ontology, it would not be possible to carry out activities in the social realm (Archer, 2003, 2007a, 2012). The duties and activities associated with particular social roles need to be understood to apply to whichever incumbent occupies those roles, otherwise they would not be implemented. This presupposes that individuals know and can deliberate on these (Archer, 2003 p. 41). The most important personal emergent property is that of being able to reflect about the self, to deliberate about one's self. The mechanism for achieving this, and implementing a process of introspection, is the idea of the internal conversation. Through such conversations we identify what we believe, desire and what we intend to do, and how we will do it:

In short, we are who we are because of what we care about: in delineating our ultimate concerns and accommodating our subordinate ones, we also define *ourselves*. We give a shape to our lives, which constitutes our internal personal integrity, and this pattern is recognisable by others as our concrete singularity. Without this rich inner life of reflection upon reality, which is the generative mechanism of our most important personal emergent property, our unique identity and way of being in the *world*, then we are condemned to the impoverishment of either 'Modernity's Man' or 'Society's Being', neither of whom play a robust and active *role* in who they are. They have been rendered passive because they have been morally evacuated; since they themselves are not allowed to play a major part in the making of their own lives. Realism revindicates real powers for real *people* who live in the real *world*.

However, we do not make our personal identities under the circumstances of our own choosing. Our placement in society rebounds upon us, affecting the persons we become, but also and more forcefully influencing the social identities which we can achieve. Personal and social identity must not be elided, because the former derives from our relations with all three orders of reality, whilst our social *selves* are defined *only* in social terms (Archer, 2000 p. 10).

In developing the notion of the internal conversation Archer engages with the work of William James, Charles Pierce, and Mead. James explores the notion of first person ontology, and the idea of introspection as a dialogue with oneself. He outlines the idea of 'speaking' and 'listening' to ourselves, engaging our previous ideas and experiences from a present position which Archer finds useful. However, she draws most specifically on Pierce. He posits the notion of an inner dialogue or conversation which goes beyond just 'speaking' and 'listening' but extends to responding as well. It is his notion that the "I", the present self is the only one capable of action, and since he envisaged

society as an open system, which resonates with critical realism, there is a sense of potential for creativity and innovation. Emerging from this comes the notion of interlocuters – the past `Me`, the present `I` and the future `You`, the different aspects of internal engagement. This addresses who is speaking to whom, but also how one can be both subject and object at the same time. By the separation of different elements, and using time as a separator this allows for both speaking and listening, alternating between the subjective and the objective. Archer posited a process whereby there is an exchange of thoughts, questions and responses, and over time, however short, this process can then be extended. In some instances the conversation might proceed by questioning, however she also outlines a process she calls musing, In the process of identifying key concerns, individuals explore those aspects which are more or less important, but also how to proceed – a process of exploring possible scenarios to determine possible outcomes or possibilities. The outcome might be to accommodate or to subordinate. This leads to self-knowledge. Archer provides this in diagrammatic form in Figure 6 below.

Such conversations are ongoing and traverse a whole lifetime. They may move between the past, present and future. In intervening at one particular point in time can one analyse the influence and extent of a project. The conversation changes over time as a consequence of the various and past life projects that have occurred. Since the underlying idea was that the `Me`, `I`, and `You` were different elements of the ego, they alter and change in consistent relationship to each other. Archer indicates that the `I` changes over the course of time, and at the same time the `Me` and the `You` change alongside it. Figure 7 shows the trajectory of this. Since both are coloured by the perspective of the `I`, and by new experiences and environments, this is unsurprising.

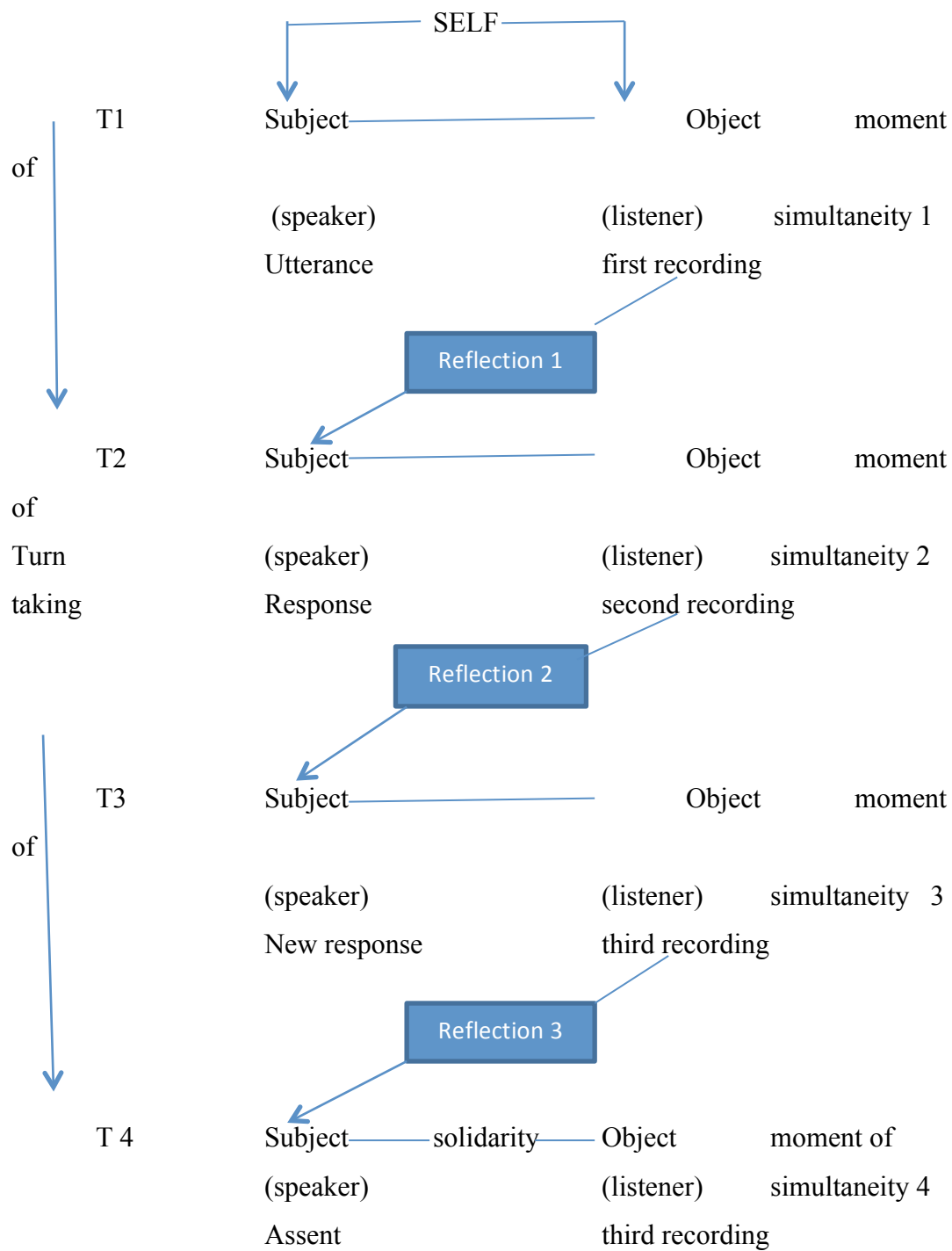


Figure 6: The internal conversation (Archer, 2003 p. 99)

Lifetime

acting

& dialogical
self

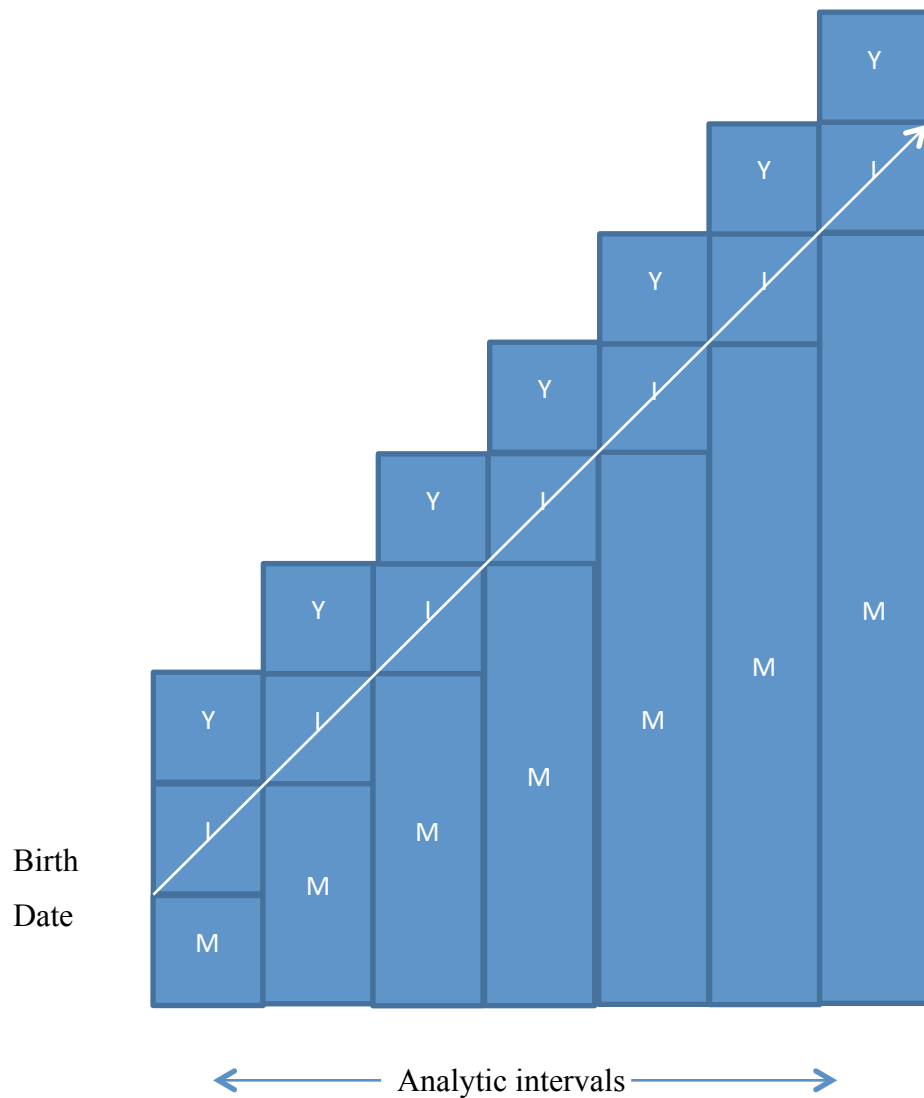


Figure 7: Internal conversation, life course and analytic intervals

Given that the conversation happens across a time continuum, moving from that past which provides conditions for the current, and projects into the future. It may be a way to map or understand how the project has developed and how opportunities or constraints have been engaged. Archer provides this mapped onto the morphogenetic process:

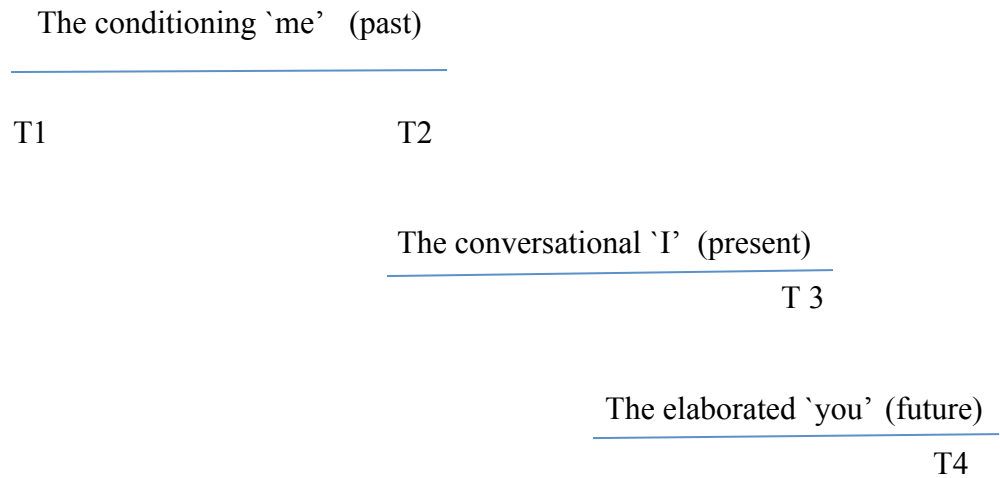


Figure 8: The morphogenesis of the person (adapted from Archer, 2003 p. 115)

What this outlines is the process of the development of a personal identity, in the light of the three realms, natural, practical and social with which we engage. For each of these an individual may, in terms of physical well-being (natural), or performative achievement (practical) or self-worth (social), prioritise differently. One might be more concerned about health and well-being, whilst another might be more driven by performative achievement, and these priorities would account for differences between them. Archer (2003 p.124) notes "In short, who we are, is a matter of what we care about most and the commitments we make accordingly". There are also elements of the other spaces individuals occupy such as corporate agent (We) or Actor (You) in the more plural or group aspects of life. The diagram below shows how individuals might review their processes.

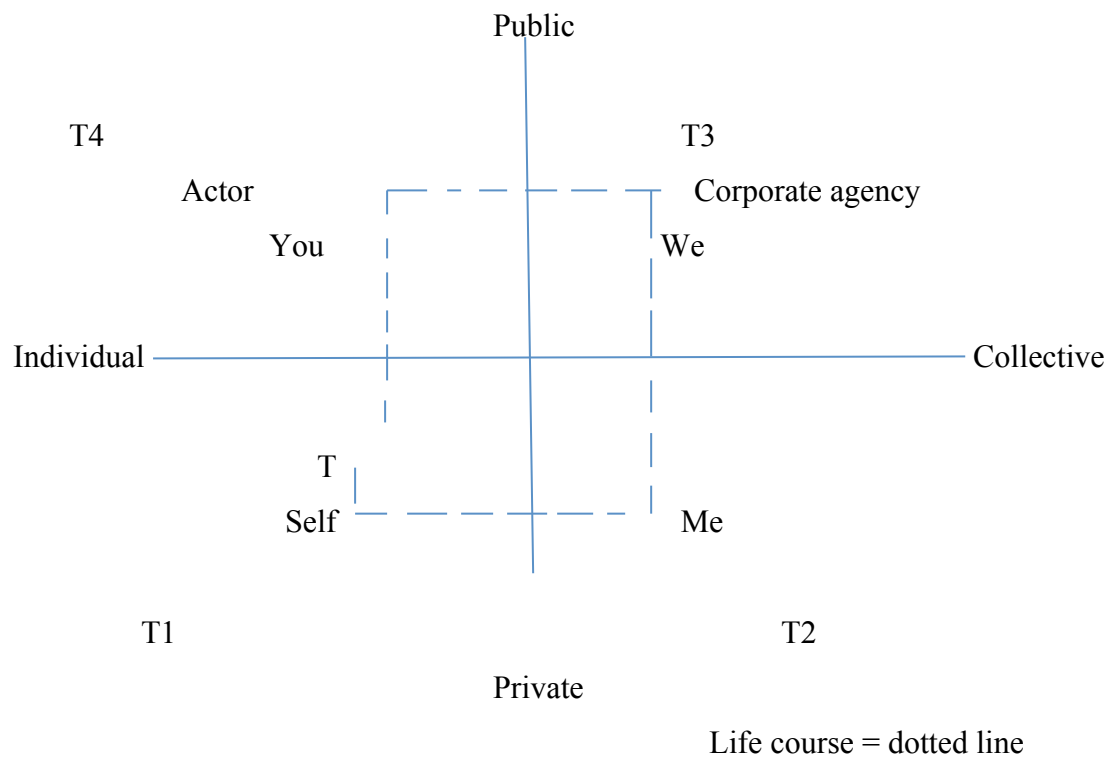


Figure 9: How the subject reviews itself as social object (Archer, 2003 p. 124)

Whilst we have focused on the personal identity of individuals in the mediation of structural or cultural emergent properties, individuals operate in a range of different ways and not always on their own, in social settings. Realists have a stratified notion of human identity. It is necessary to differentiate between the individual person, the social agent and the Actor, which is done on a numerical base. The individual strives for new placements, roles and deliberates on them, whilst as social agent the individual becomes part of a larger group who have a relationship with the distribution of resources, they are a member of a collectivity which share life chances. Thus agents are referred to in the plural. Finally as an Actor the individual is the incumbent of roles which they occupy and fulfil in their own way. They would aim to take on a role which relate best to their own prioritised concerns, and which reflect their values. One role might be that of academic, or supervisor. There are personal emergent properties which have causal efficacy, so for example, personal identity may have the ability to modify their social placement, although not entirely erase it. "It is by being persons that we not only strive for new placements and for roles, but also reflexively deliberate upon them once they are ours" (Archer, 2003 p. 119). Thus someone taking up the role of academic, or of supervisors, would engage with the roles, and reflexively deliberate on different elements as they work towards those aspects which they know as their prioritised

concerns. In this study I will be looking at postgraduate supervisors, looking at how they experience their role. This will be done via eliciting, as far as possible, their stories from each. The role of the narrative in exploring various aspects of personal identity is interestingly presupposed by a comment in Archer (2003 p. 126):

To begin with, we are not subjectively free to make what we will of the past, constructing our biographies along such story lines as we please. The `deposited' features are real and impose serious limitations upon narrative freedom because any re-telling of the past has to account for them. Most importantly, however we try to re-tell it, we are still shackled to our old commitments pro tem ...

The notion of the inner conversation certainly resonates with work such as that of Vygotsky (1978), Billig (1999) and Cazden (1988), and whilst some might have had a more social focus, it is precisely the interface between the social and the individual that the issue of agency can be explored.

Through her acknowledgement of the elements in which the individual and the communal come together such as in social placement, or in the corporate self she does not ignore the social aspects, nor in the explication of the internal conversation whilst acknowledging that finally it is an individual decision that maps out the process.

Emerging from her research in which she set out to articulate a framework for operationalizing the internal conversation, and drawing on 20 interviews with a diverse group of people ranging in age, gender, work, social standing Archer developed a framework and description of different modes of reflexivity (Archer, 2007a). After an initial discussion with participants a list of ten activities that facilitated reflection and the internal conversation was derived from which an interview was then structured. These provided a guide in analysing data. These activities might not all be engaged by all respondents (Archer, 2003 p. 161) and were as follows:

- Planning – future looking about what to do
- Rehearsing – practising in various ways what will do
- Mulling-over – dwelling on
- Deciding – weighing alternatives and evidencing decision
- Re-living – going over events, interactions etc.
- Prioritising – what matters most
- Imagining – what would happen if...
- Clarifying – what you are thinking about
- Imaginary conversations – with others
- Budgeting – what is the cost not only in monetary terms

From analysis of the data Archer posits four modes of reflexivity, communicative reflexives, autonomous reflexives, meta-reflexives and fractured reflexives. In her exploration she theorises that continuity or stability is a key factor, especially contextually, in contradistinction to one's original and involuntary social placement, and notes "the most exciting finding of all was that those practising the three modes of reflexivity also assumed different 'stances' towards society and particularly *vis à vis* its constraints and enablements" (Archer, 2003 p. 163). She sees in these three or four modes, a differentiated mechanism, through which agency mediates structure and culture. What emerges is that whilst everyone is reflexive, this occurs differentially, with internal conversation happening differently, with different forms of deliberation, different foci and different ways of addressing issues. As the world globalises, mobility increases and the nature of work shifts, longer term stability and continuity seems to diminish and to be less of an option for individuals, the need to be reflexive, and to embrace the variable opportunities becomes more imperative. Whilst the findings are interesting it needs to be noted that this research was done in the context of the United Kingdom, and from the natal perspective of each individual. Other contexts, and in particular the South African context, may be very different and provoke very different responses. Interviewing participants within their professional contexts may also have a differential effect and therefore needs to be taken into consideration.

3.3.1 Communicative Reflexives:

In considering what decision to take communicative reflexives take decisions after consultation. This group initially considers whatever the issue maybe for themselves, and then seeks interaction with others on the issue. They manifest both a private, internal process, and external more public process in order to make decisions. In this way others play an important role. Within Archer's group, these reflexives expressed doubt as to whether the internal dialogue on its own would be the most useful way to reach resolution. There were three other characteristics related to such reflexives, firstly a high degree of 'contextual continuity', with little geographical mobility, stable relationships with family and friends, and occupational continuity. A second characteristic would be that of an ability to maintain a coherence between their various concerns, projects or interests. In many instances their ultimate concern was either their family or friends, and they were the group for whom 'people' were of key importance. The final characteristic was that most were satisfied with the way their planning had worked out, there was a degree of what Archer termed contentment. What this shows in relation to the initial involuntary placement of individuals in society is that this group will tend

towards maintaining the status quo, in other words encourage morphostasis. Archer argues that they tend to be apolitical:

If this finding could be generalised to the population at large, then `communicative reflexivity' would have far reaching political implications. It would be a power subjective force, working conservatively for social stability, because the accommodations which `communicative reflexives' achieve with contentment are inimical to calls for political radicalism. `Communicative reflexives' are fundamentally apolitical, not because they are necessarily unaware of social injustice, and not because they necessarily fail to diagnose the manipulative pressures of market forces, but rather because of their underlying belief that they have succeeded in carving out a micro-life world whose intrinsic satisfactions outweigh any difference that extrinsic macro-political intervention could make to them (Archer, 2003 p. 184).

In working with constraints and enablements such reflectives would tend to choose ways that required the least change, thus maintain processes. Thus their projects must fit within their current social contexts rather than challenging them. It is for this reason that Archer (2003 p. 208) claims "To remain continuous with one's initial and involuntary placement, involves the doings of an active agent; it is not the deterministic product of agential passivity".

3.3 2 Autonomous Reflexives.

Unlike communicative reflexives, autonomous reflexives do not value external interaction in the process of monitoring, planning and deciding. Their process is indeed an internal one, and they are happy relying on their own internal dynamics. They take responsibility for their processes and as such see themselves as decisive. They engage in a much wider range of inner activities than those in other groups. In many cases these reflexives show a desire to move away from their involuntary social placement, many of their backgrounds are more discontinuous, although not necessarily problematic and mobility is welcomed. Most of their personal projects would see a break with their initial contexts, as well as a socio-economic break. They would tend toward transformatory projects and therefore would actively engage the enablements and constraints within their milieu. They are much more likely to engage in a variety of projects over the course of their life, unlike the communicative reflexives. Like communicatives the autonomous reflectives tend towards a coherence between their projects, however in this instance rather than a contiguity with interpersonal connections, interpersonal relationships for autonomous reflectives are subordinate to their ultimate concerns. Their final characteristic is that of individualism. This complements the notion of being able to work on their own. Their work is often seen as their primary concern, and more focus on performative achievement is notable. Secondary concerns are subordinated to the

achievement of primary concerns, and are not allowed to impede the progress. Since they engage in several projects, this means that they will have encountered a variety of different enablements and constraints. They learn to anticipate and to strategise to move beyond them.

3.3.3 Meta-reflexives.

Meta-reflexives engage in an additional part of the process, engaging in not just a reflection or questioning process, but further analysing that process. It promotes a deeper sense of self knowledge, and is a monitoring of the self, and the processes of thinking rather than activities. This group, like the autonomous reflexives tend to have a background of `contextual discontinuity` however they have a very different social stance. Archer describes this group as `contextually unsettled`, and through this they generally produce a critique of society and themselves. Generally they are very mobile and concerned about social injustice, although not often politically involved in revolutionary activity. Given their idealistic nature they tend to be drawn toward vocational endeavours. However, because of their critical but idealistic nature they find it difficult to develop coherence between their projects “...the `meta-reflexive` has the greatest difficulties, during his or her life-course, in completing the sequence, “concerns → projects → practices”, to his or her own satisfaction. Their practices will change considerably and so, more reluctantly, will their projects, but not their ultimate concerns.” (Archer, 2003 p. 259). They therefore struggle to find a way to further their projects. As a result of these characteristics they have a most particular relationship to the social constraints and enablements in their structural spaces. They often discount the personal costs involved in engaging these and it is for this reason that Archer (2003 p. 274) describes them as “...not merely the critics of the social institutions that they encounter, they are also society’s subversives. They can neither be bought off by societal inducements, in the form of enablements ..nor can they be repressed by constraints which impose an objective price upon in engaging in given courses of action”.

3.3.4 Fractured Reflexives.

Archer discovered that for some the process of reflexivity had been suspended, some events had intervened to make these powers for these respondents inoperative. She identified two categories here – those who were impeded, and those who were displaced. It was often the case that the mode of reflexivity they were most prone towards was no longer optimal, requiring some reworking. These were displaced. Then there are those who had not developed a reflexive mode to the point where they could use it and therefore were impeded. Fractured reflexives are often disoriented about their

concerns or about how to act and why. Their inner dialogue does not work to guide their action, but rather to increase levels of distress. This group is the closest to passive of all for a variety of reasons.

Although Archer maintains that these categories are not fixed but are rather tendencies, the presentation makes them seem much more fixed. The presentation of the characteristics of each form would indicate that it might be difficult, or extremely unusual, given their background, for anyone to change mode. This suggests a more static view than Archer is willing to admit to. In her later work she is careful to indicate that an individual may use all of these different reflexive modes depending on what they confront (Archer, 2007a, 2012). Equally, the notion of an all-encompassing ultimate concern similarly suggests a process that may be less open to change. The question may be how many projects can be undertaken, can these change with changing understandings, or growing self-knowledge. These are questions which remain as yet unanswered.

In the delineation of the different modes that emerge, Archer does make occasional reference to the emotional aspects that are linked to the internal conversations, most particularly for the fractured reflexives but generally this is not a key feature. The role of emotion in the process may be under considered and Holmes maintains that this may have been insufficiently done:

...efforts to consider the emotional component of reflexivity have been limited. Highlighting reflexive emotionality will rescue definitions and explications of reflexivity from their overfocus on the cognitive and the individual. Instead, I propose defining reflexivity as an emotional, embodied *and* cognitive process in which social actors have feelings about and try to understand and alter their lives in relation to their social and natural environment and to others (Holmes, 2010 p. 140).

It is these different reflexive modes, and the effect that these have on individual stances that may influence not only individual identities but also the way they assume the different roles that are required of them in their different positions. In particular professional identities and roles may be impacted by these quite different engagements. As the choices that they make as they are confronted by different structures may be influenced by these reflections. What perhaps is explored less fully by Archer is the link between individual responses, agency and learning, an element that is explored by Biesta and his team looking at learning in the workplace (Biesta, Field, Goodson, Hodkinson, & MacLeod, 2008; Biesta & Tedder, 2006, 2007). Through their work, echoing Emirbayer and Mische (1998), they indicate that individuals may change their agentic orientations in relation their environment, and their understandings of that environment. They maintain that it is not just context that counts but time, and they are particularly clear that narrative offers a way to explore

these changes over time. Thus Emirbayer and Mische (1998), and Biesta et al. (2007, 2008) suggest that the role of reflection is vital in allowing individuals not only to consider the contextual influences but also to be able to consider their agentic possibilities, learning in the process. In foregrounding the role that narrative or biography can play in this process Biesta notes:

Emirbayer and Mische argue that such learning processes require 'imaginative distancing' and 'communicative evaluation' (see p.971). They require that, in some way or form, we distance ourselves from our agentic orientations so as to make them an object of attention, reflection, evaluation and imagination. It is here that we can locate the importance of narrative, the importance of telling stories about one's life (either to oneself or to others), ...(B)y subjecting [our] own agentic orientations to imaginative recomposition and critical judgement actors can loosen themselves from past patterns of interaction and reframe their relationships to existing constraints' (p.1010. emphasis in original). From this perspective the life-narrative at least has the potential to be a 'place' for agentic learning (Biesta & Tedder, 2007 p. 138).

In the next chapter I will explore the broader contexts in which academics operate, and which may affect their activities, and which they engage and reflect on in coming to understand their lives and decide on their actions. It is these environments which engage individuals and shape the identity process. I look at the different environments and contexts that individual supervisors confront and explore the different emphases in the expanding literature on the postgraduate sector.

Chapter Four: The postgraduate environment:

Context, practice and debates

... the emergence of a new conjuncture between the cultural order (ideationally based) and the structural order (materially based) is shaping new situational contexts in which more and more social subjects find themselves and whose variety they have to confront – in a novel manner. (Archer, 2012 p.1)

In this chapter then, I intend to explore the broader contexts or orders which supervisors confront, and which shape their environment, thus beginning with the macro level. The international context structures and shapes regional, national and institutional environment through the ideas, concepts and the institutions that emerge. Ideas such as free market economies, accountability, competitiveness, utility and vocationalism among many others underpin many of the new policies and institutions that affect the sector:

For critical realists, then, social structure is not merely the voluntaristic creation of agency. Rather, the fact that social structure pre-exists and is therefore ontologically irreducible to the current exercise of human agency implies that it enjoys a certain degree of autonomy from the latter (Archer, 1995, pp. 137-139). Critical realism portrays actors as constantly drawing upon (pre-existing, possibly inadequately understood) social structures in order to act, with the ensuing actions subsequently bringing about (intentionally or otherwise) the reproduction or transformation of those structures. The existence of social structures is a necessary condition for the exercise of intentional agency. (Lewis, 2002 p.19)

The emergent international social trends and policies tend to operate through bodies such as the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank among others. As different regions and nations endorse ideas promulgated through these bodies structures are introduced which may facilitate or hinder operations at more micro levels of society. Constraints and enablements work at every level of society including the macro level, but the interaction between macro and micro provides useful insights into how agency mediates structure and culture. Archer (2000) is clear though, that the macro only provides the environment into which individuals come it does not determine their actions. Sibeon (2004 p. 171) comments that:

Society consists of micro- mezzo- and macro-levels of social process, each of which- though they overlap and indirectly influence each other – have a relatively

independent existence in the sense that each exhibits distinct properties and effects of its own that are not reducible to...the properties of the other levels.

What it does do is to provide resources and possibilities which may or may not be used, and which work together with a range of other aspects to confront nations, institutions and individuals differently. So whilst everyone is initially involuntarily placed in society, each person makes their own choices from amongst the resources available and acts in ways that they themselves choose, and they make those choices in relation to the situation they find themselves in. Individuals can determine their own course of action but not entirely without consideration of the situation. Each individual makes choices guided by their own interests and concerns, and which differ from person to person, thus ensuring that each person makes different choices (Archer, 2000).

This then describes the macro situation that prevails prior to individuals taking up the role of supervisor. Both Archer (2000, 2003) and Sibeon (Sibeon, 2004) argue for the importance of examining different levels of societal forces, that is the structural and cultural conditions that pertain and operate in relation to one another. In this chapter I draw on the framework offered by Brante (2001 p. 180) which goes a little further to outline the different levels to explore how these affect the postgraduate level. His frame consists of indicating aspects of the international, national or what he terms the interinstitutional, the institutional, interindividual and the individual contexts.

Understanding how the levels interact is important:

...each lower level is a precondition for the existence of the higher levels... lower levels can offer a partial explanation of higher levels...the higher level has a certain, relative autonomy in relation to the lower – laws and empirical phenomena at the higher level cannot be completely explained by reduction to the lower. Each level has an existence sui generis... higher levels constitute surrounding or environments that may have causal impact on phenomena at lower levels (Brante, 2001a p. 176)

Institutions of Higher Education, and indeed Higher Education systems have been significantly impacted by international globalising trends. Barnett (2012 p. 5) points to a number of insistent themes that permeate the sector such as the drive towards performativity, emphasis on efficiency, outputs and so-called quality, the move towards knowledge for application and in particular a move away from liberal education toward greater instrumentality and vocationalism. The growing influence of governments in the sector, as well as interventions from beyond national borders has become evident in many nations. He does however, also point to the opportunities and possibilities that it opens up for institutions. Others such as Nussbaum (2009 np) are harshly critical of these developments:

Education is often discussed in low-level utilitarian terms: how can we produce technically trained people who can hold onto “our” share of the global market? With the rush to profitability, values precious for the future of democracy are in danger of getting lost. The profit motive suggests to most concerned politicians that science and technology are of crucial importance. We should have no objection to good scientific and technical education. But other abilities – abilities crucial both to the health of democracy and to the creation of a decent world culture and a robust type of global citizenship – are at risk of getting lost in the competitive flurry.

Of course national systems and institutions respond to these macro processes in relation to their own contexts, national histories and events. Thus the emergent structures and practices may differ one from another. It is with this in mind that in this section I examine international and national contexts since the pervasive discourses and ideas within these broader spaces are evident within the South African local and institutional contexts although with different emphases given the particular political, social, cultural and economic history. Creating the cultural context for systems internationally, it becomes apparent that there are a number of growing contradictions evidenced through a plethora of texts such as Bill Readings’ *The University in Ruins*, (Readings, 1996), Giroux’s notions of the crisis in higher education (Giroux, 1995, 2000, 2009) or Scott’s indications of the language of crisis that pervades discussions of higher education (Scott, 1995). Quinn (2006 p. 105) notes:

...people can (through critique and exposing the invisible, the taken-for-granted) resist powerful discourses “Universities are then ‘fragile settlements’ between and within competing discourses, ‘subordinate, dominant, co-existing and competing but always open to challenge and change, to reworking meaning and truth” (Kenway 1995: 121 in Walker 2000:2). Generally in HE internationally there are a host of competing discourses.

Policy documents similarly reflect these contradictions. Barnett in his publications foregrounds the contradictions that are now manifest through the various ideas about what the main function of the university is (Barnett, 2000, 2011, 2012). Nickolai and colleagues note that this creates tensions and contradictions which reflect through their missions (Nickolai, Hoffman, & Traufu, 2012). The modern university incorporates a huge variety of differing often contradictory ideas relating to the purpose and function of universities, to the role and function of academics, as well as to what constitutes disciplines, what is legitimate knowledge, which activities are the basis of good research, and what and how researchers should behave. These are contested areas. Austin describes this as “accelerated and disrupting change in regard to...internal contexts” (Austin, 2012 p. 57). Denning in his exploration of the neo-liberal university and the way that much related to ways of thinking about higher education has been eroded since World War II, makes the argument that “...the

university must thus be understood as a form of global mass culture, and that this raises a specific set of contradictions which are closer to those of the other culture industries than to an older notion of “the academy”; ..” (Denning, 2005 p. 2). These affect the way individuals respond in translating their roles such as supervisor, researcher or lecturer, and in which they try to further their own specific projects. In such situations Archer maintains that individuals will need to make decisions, through reflective processes in order to be able to act (Archer, 2012). What follows is an exploration of the context in which academics take up the supervisory role, it outlines the T1 environment which pre-dates the incumbent and in which they must operate. This then will indicate what resources might be available, the discourses and cultural practices that might influence, but might also be circumvented by the incumbents.

4.1 The International Context

Issues relating to postgraduate study have, as indicated earlier, become increasingly important as global discourses highlight shifts towards a knowledge economy, foregrounding the importance of research and innovation to the economic and social development and the need for high level education. The role of Higher Education institutions and of research has become central in this process with growing interest in the postgraduate sector in particular (Zhao, 2001). This is reflected through the rapid growth of research into, and literature in, the area of postgraduate studies, and in particular in relation to postgraduate supervision. The importance of research and the postgraduate sector for national research and development is seen vital and drives policy agendas (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Researchers grapple with a range of postgraduate questions from the effects of the changing higher education environment, the shape and structure of postgraduate activities, exploring the trends and exposing the realities of individual experiences of the processes at this level. As the economic drive begins to govern research to a much greater extent than previously, it also puts pressure on postgraduate processes, forcing changes. Yet practice within institutions may continue without the practitioners necessarily being entirely aware of all the facets of a highly complex environment, one which Barnett has characterized as one of “super-complexity” (Barnett, 2000) and which affects their activities in incremental ways. As Bradley, Engelbrecht and Höjer note (2010 p. 774) “The focus is mainly on outcomes, and relational aspects are of less importance”.

Within lecture theatres and tutorial spaces academics have, until recently, had a reasonable degree of autonomy in deciding what and how to teach, within a broadly agreed curriculum. Their engagement with students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level has largely been an

individual affair based on their disciplinary expertise and with the focus on developing knowledge and expertise in the discipline (Herman, 2011; Johnson, Lee, & Green, 2000; Ramsden, 2003). As supervisors and postgraduate lecturers they would see themselves as developing a deep knowledge and understanding within their discipline, stimulating both curiosity and critical thinking within the domain. Notions of academic freedom, the ability to choose what to teach and research reasonably independently of interference or pressure have been seen as a key characteristic of the profession. This has been a particular marker of academic activity as noted by Webster and Masoeta (2002 p. 61) from their South African perspective and referring to local policy and institutions, about the special features of academic work:

Academics are a distinct occupational group who claim autonomy over their work as the submission to the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE) from the University of the Witwatersrand states. 'All universities are defined as universities because of their *core* activity – the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. In order to preserve the integrity of universities as institutions that pursue knowledge in this disinterested way, universities have to be autonomous, both from the state and from civil society, with regard to academic matters' (Submission to the National Commission on Higher Education, University of Witwatersrand, May 1995).

This shows the strong links between the global and the local, where local policy documents such as the South African NCHE and 1997 White Paper on Higher Education also reflect the broader international trends. However, with the positioning of Higher Education as a global and national resource and driver of both economic development and human capacity development in an economy now styled as a “knowledge economy” which has had a direct impact in particular on the postgraduate sector (Nerad, 2006), such ideas and practices are changing. The role of research and development has become much more centre stage, and thus both the development of researchers with requisite skills, and the development of a more diverse knowledge production process have emerged as vital issues of national and international concern and therefore have warranted intervention into Higher Education systems by a host of stakeholders. As such they form the focus for several international studies into postgraduate performance.

These changes give some indication of a system that is becoming fractured and fragmented. In many ways there are tensions developing between varying ideas, beliefs and practices. Altbach notes:

Universities worldwide are being called on to fulfil more and more roles, often with fewer resources. As a result, academic missions may become dispersed and the quality of the work may decrease. In this era, the function of universities as institutions devoted essentially to teaching and research may be weakened by the struggle to be entrepreneurial and market-relevant (Ben-David, 1977; Clark,

2004; Geiger, 2004). The academic drift of the 21st century raises concerns about the core functions of universities and how contemporary changes have affected academic missions. (Altbach, 2011 p.5).

Universities themselves are being positioned differently. Rather than independent and autonomous institutions what has begun to emerge are different types of institutions. National institutions, often styled national universities are very much seen as in the service of delivering for the needs of the state, Universities of Technology have emerged through transitioning former polytechnics (or in South Africa `technikons') or technical colleges into universities, and they deliver for particular societal needs. In this way institutions may be differentiated and this can affect the staff and their activities. In the South African context the need for differentiation is clearly spelt out in the White Paper for Postsecondary Education (Bradley et al., 2010) but all will be expected to be research active.

Discourses relating to higher education have also changed. Notions of collegiality, disciplinary expertise and autonomy are becoming ever more muted, whilst a language of economics and productivity has emerged quite stridently. Thus terms like efficiency and effectiveness have become all pervasive, as have viability, performance management, and being productive. The focus is on throughput and time –to-completion, whilst language linked to education and development is more muted.

4.1.1 Global Structures and Organisations

A number of international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the (World Bank) WB and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have higher education on their agendas, and have developed plans which member countries endorse. In this way through policies, reports and funding initiatives they exert pressure and affect emergent structures and activities at national and institutional levels.

Some of the factors within the global arena that affect the postgraduate sector are the emergence of higher education blocks or areas, associations or bodies such as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) set up with the aim of standardising, harmonising and integrating Higher Education activities within a geographic region. The European Union (EU) has been particularly instrumental in this process beginning with the Bologna Agreement and Lisbon Convention. These can be seen as structures which shape not just the regional but also the international systems. As noted on the EHEA webpage “ This implies reforming the very different higher education systems across Europe

to create compatible degrees that are recognisable across borders. It also implies the creation of a European Research Area (ERA), with intertwined research programmes and mobile researchers” (“EU-ASIA Higher Education Platform,” 2011). It encourages joint research projects across borders and the movement of students and staff across the region, as well as aggressively seeking to attract foreign participation. EHEA planned to market the European universities as preferable destinations for both staff and students, thus escalating international competition within the Higher Education sector, and contributing to the emergence of the commercialisation and marketization of Higher Education. This can be seen in responses such as the development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) University network bringing together key Asian Higher Education institutions, the development of University Associations, consortia and regional areas such as Latin American Common Higher Education Area (LAC), Association of African Universities (AAU) or regional blocs such as Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU). These have often, although not always, been promoted by the EU and sometimes they emerge in reaction to such activities. Such groups become drivers for change through the development of projects, policy and funding initiatives and most have research and research training high on their agendas. Supervisors may find that such joint projects provide more generous funding opportunities, and there may be more opportunities for students and staff to network. Such opportunities to lead such projects may however, be limited to a few and therefore there may be much greater levels of constraints in terms of leading individual projects. The need for supervisors to be sensitive to the needs of international students and their issues thus increases in importance. The financial rewards for research have also become drivers for projects that are valued in institutions. Thus there are a number of factors which might offer opportunities or which constrain both supervisors and students.

Given the renewed focus on innovation and creativity, postgraduate studies, research and their service to national and industrial directives this has a clear impact on the postgraduate sector, regulation of this and therefore on supervisory processes. The push for research has led to national groups and industry setting priority areas and channelling funding in these directions. In many instances the drive for accreditation of research has led to the trend for these processes to begin to happen outside of institutions of higher learning such as through the Disney and McDonalds universities (Wolhuter, Higgs, Higgs, & Ntshoe, 2009). This is significant with implications for the generation of so-called ‘unbiased’ or more impartial knowledge. Perhaps three trends will impact ever more heavily on institutions and on research and supervision more especially, that is the move towards supra-national governance; the pursuance of partnerships between Higher Education and Industry, and finally institutional clusters or conglomerates. Thus the Bologna process, and Lisbon

agreements in the European area are having far reaching effects on Higher Education, most strongly in Europe but impacting much further. In Africa there are moves afoot to ensure similar coalitions through the African Union. So for example we have SARUA (the Southern African Regional Universities Association), alongside the AAU (the Association of African Universities), and we await further outcomes from these moves. It is clear that their agendas mirror those of the international bodies. These moves take on particular importance given the colonial history of most African states, and their specific struggles to become international influences in their own right.

Such moves affect the postgraduate sector, introducing pressures and trajectories that shape practices, in particular the effects of heightened competition and funding are powerful driving forces. As such these engender emergent structures and cultural practices that change supervision. Many of these are outlined in documents which provide impetus to national developments. Greater controls become ever more evident, especially through policy developments.

In a recent SARUA report key strategies were identified, and it may be salutatory to explore further what national developments, policies and processes relate to these to see their effect at lower levels:

Table 3: Ten strategies for expanding and transforming higher education in the SADC region

	Strategy	Recommendations to Ministers of Education
1	Scale up and modernise the higher education system through ICT infrastructure	Champion and resource the formation of a National Research And Education Network (NREN) in each country and work closely with counterparts in Telecommunications who control resources such as network capacities and licences.
2	Increase the effectiveness of higher Education planning.	Prioritise the building of institutional research capacity and management information systems to support higher Education planning in---country and across the region.
3	Develop academic quality.	Strengthen investment in postgraduate education to increase the doctoral qualifications of academics.
4	Increase mobility of staff and students across the region.	Create a scholarship fund to strengthen and deepen collaboration between countries and institutions for the development and sharing of academic resources and capacities through innovative staff exchanges, twinning or co---badging of programmes, co---supervision, sandwich programmes and joint degrees
5	Increase the output of doctoral graduates.	Set targets for increasing doctoral graduates significantly and expand the funding for doctoral programmes to support this plan; draw on external doctoral education Support programmes; strengthen relationships between Universities and industry and science councils; develop centres of excellence; strengthen doctoral supervision; develop research benchmarks and involve postgraduate students in meeting these.
6	Strengthen regional cooperation Through sector---crossing integration Strategies based on agreed objectives, supported by funding schemes.	Fast---track the establishment of a SADC Qualifications Framework and implement strategies listed below to foster regional cooperation.
7	Foster innovation through networks For reflective learning, staff Exchange and sharing good practices.	Build up research capacity in universities and research hubs, develop entrepreneurial education (and other soft skills) and Intensify links between the public and private sectors.
8	Shift the emphasis towards knowledge diversity, interdisciplinary Knowledge practices and southern Scholarship	Establish a higher education Regional Research and Development Fund (RRDF), to foster collaboration between Institutions in different parts of the region centred on transnational research projects on areas of high regional relevance within SADC. This will build R&D capacity and Networks in critical areas and support the drive for indigenous Knowledge production for economic success and social progress, Particularly in respect of processes of democratisation.
9	Develop a funding focus for higher education.	Taking into consideration issues of higher education supply, capacity and demand, develop a funding focus and long---term policy support for higher education.
10	Strengthen governance, leadership And management in higher education	Support higher education leaders and work closely with the 'quadruple helix' for change: government leaders, higher education leaders, business leaders and community to roll out a regional strategy for higher education.

(Kotecha, 2012 p.4)

In this document increasing doctoral output is seen as essential, and interestingly they outline some of the issues in postgraduate education which affect supervisors:

Currently, doctoral students in the region face a variety of challenges which constrain their opportunities to participate in generating a world-class research. These include:

- An **absence of programmes to grow a new generation of academics.** Doctoral programmes do not focus sufficiently on creating an intellectually vibrant environment that allows students to progress in their areas of study and to engage with others in their own or other disciplines. As a result, isolation is a common experience during doctoral studies.
- A **lack of guidance from experienced academics.** The role of mentoring and supervision in the development of doctoral students is limited. In part this can be attributed to insufficient academic staff being available to supervise students or to a 'burden of supervision'. Research presented at a recent SARUA dialogue with vice chancellors from the region indicated that supervisors feel that they are allocated too many students to supervise and often have to supervise topics that are not within their area of expertise.
- The **absence of programmes to strengthen the engagement between new and established academics.**
- **Inadequate research funding for new academics.** Funding in higher education has been focused on staff and infrastructure to meet the increase in undergraduate enrolments and less funding has flowed into doctoral education.

(Kotecha, 2012 p.18)

These intentions are also reflected in the latest South African White Paper in Postsecondary Education (South Africa, 2013), showing how such initiatives are played out at local levels. This strongly indicates the needs and in some instances how these will be achieved

A plan to address the challenges of future staffing of South African universities will be developed without delay. It will focus on the following:

- Improving the pipeline of academic staff, from postgraduate students to attracting young academics to academic careers, while providing them with adequate financial and academic support and mentoring to complete Doctoral studies... (Bradley et al., 2010 p. 35).

This document has since given rise in South Africa to a specific plan to develop a new generation of academics (very similar to an earlier project mentoring young academics – see Theo and Paulina's stories) (HESA, 2011). The hope is to begin with 200 posts in 2015. Another international trend in dealing with these issues relating to postgraduate supervision and the weaknesses faced is to advocate supervisor training. This, in the increasingly complex higher education arena, is not inappropriate, and indeed may be extremely helpful providing a space for academics to discuss their

issues. Teams of trainers, often with members from various countries, travel offering training in supervision, such as the Carnegie or Stanford initiatives. The fact is, though, that this is often seen as a once off process (do the course, which may be of some length and you have the answers), and it may lack contextual nuances, so that perhaps a more useful process would be one that encourages ongoing engagement and interaction between new and more experienced supervisors on a regular basis. The other constraint of such activities is that although academics are already overstretched, such training is simply added to their load without space being made for such engagement. This seems tantamount to ensuring its limited effectiveness. In an already pressured context one might question whether this does not exacerbate the time constraints that academics are grappling with.

To assist the process there has been the emergence of a host of bodies such as Quality Assurance organisations, Audit mechanisms, Qualifications Frameworks and Accreditation bodies which now impact both nationally and transnationally. Since much of the focus is particularly on research it impacts on postgraduate activities from admissions to supervision. These bodies serve to limit and control activities within Higher Education, within Universities and manifest within the supervision sessions even though such might not be obvious. The emergence at national levels of these has seen the similar emergence of structures within institutions, and policies to govern practice.

Alongside this has been the development of the Global Education Index (GEI) and university ranking tables which exacerbate a competitive milieu at all levels, and directly affects resourcing of systems and institutions. Erkkilä (2014 p. 91) articulates this in terms of the discourse environment they create thus beginning to build a different cultural context:

At a general level, there is a drive for uniformity in the policies and practices of higher education as a result of the use of global university rankings. This convergence favours notions of competition, economism and elitism, often referred to as excellence in higher education. Though diversity is officially emphasised in the debates concerning rankings, they nevertheless tend to enforce uniformity among disciplines and academic institutions. However, the impacts of the rankings mostly tend to be indirect, often pitching and echoing existing ideas and discourses about higher education in Europe.

It is emphasised however, that this varies according to particular contexts. Thus internal priorities and resourcing of activities are directly influenced by consideration of these processes promoting a variety of emergent practices. Thus structurally, institutions set up mechanisms to ensure that they can meet the desired criteria for ranking, and in conjunction there are many who find employment as consultants and promoters of the systems. High among the indices are elements such as numbers

of PhDs produced that therefore become important to promote these within institutions in one way or another, and thus they increase pressure on the postgraduate sector and on supervisors. Such emphases affect a range of practices such as employment criteria, and encourage institutions to pressurise staff into gaining further qualifications, as well as to increase publications whilst taking on more postgraduate students. These are some of the pressures that staff comment on in relation to time and extended workloads, whilst perhaps not recognising the broader influences driving the process (Hazelkorn, 2009a, 2009b; Robinson, 2013; Sauder & Espeland, 2009).

Whilst such agendas are pursued aggressively, in Africa and in South Africa in particular, there is a glaring tension with the often espoused need for Africanisation of the system and the curricula. This is a persistent emphasis in much documentation such as institutional Mission and Visions, and in strategic plans. There is a drive to increase black academics, to re-explore history that has long been skewed by colonial pasts, and a desire to explore and prioritise indigenous knowledges and indigenous languages. In many instances these may be in tension with the need for rapid increase in research, in retaining experienced supervisors/academics who may be mainly white and perceived to be western in orientation as some documentation attests (Chetty & Merritt, 2014). These areas may need both time and space to develop robustly, but the time squeeze emphasizes the contradictions in this regard.

However, there is also an impact on the cultural climates created in these processes. In particular Erkkilä (2014 p. 92) drawing on both Foucault and Weber indicates how, despite stringent critiques and contestation, a mentality of compliance emerges and a drive to improve one's standing noting how "...statistics and book-keeping can create an 'iron-cage' which seemingly leaves no other option but to submit to their calculative logic".

4.1.2 Global Funding Processes

Another result of global influences has been newly emergent government funding policies for higher education as part of a range of neo-liberal policy initiatives, reinforced by support from international bodies like the WB, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the OECD. This affects everything from institutional funding, funding for research and funding for students. As Altbach and Knight (2007) note this is a consequence of the development of a free trade context embedded in concepts such as promoting international mobility, transnational activities and where everything, health and education included, is seen as a commodity to be traded. Gaining a university education is seen as a private good rather than a public one despite the national priority given to this. However, through

the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other such bodies a number of regulatory frameworks have been developed to assist international trade and exchange in education. Rankings are seen as one way to attract funding for institutions supported by these bodies. The processes of exchange and movement are incorporated in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which governs economic trading across borders. This has seen the proliferation of private Higher Education institutions and activities such as franchising of courses. There are pressures on academics now to run money earning courses or put materials and courses online. Lucrative short courses are becoming important. These new activities and expectations are additional aspects in the expanding workloads of academics. As such this has enabled governments to look to limiting funding for education. Even where perhaps governments have seemingly increased funding to Higher Education, the pressure to take in greater numbers of students, to put in place monitoring mechanisms, and new administrative and bureaucratic processes has seen greater financial demands on institutions thus straining resources.

Increasing student fees has been a central alternative for raising funds for institutions thereby affecting who gets access to such education. What funding is received from government often comes with greater restrictions in relation to its use and the requirement for greater accountability. Thus institutions have been forced to seek funds in a variety of different ways, through increased research, through partnership in research with industry and patents often being in the forefront of such strategies. Mendoza (2007 p. 71) notes:

In the last two and a half decades, the U.S. government has fostered cooperation between industries and universities in order to cope with funding gaps and global competitive markets by introducing a number of laws and programs that allow universities to patent their research and to engage in collaborations with the private sector toward opportunities in the new economy (Altbach, 2005; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, 2005). Under this scenario, research universities have become a source of national wealth development through applied research rather than primarily a means for liberal education of undergraduates.... At the turn of the 21st century, these initiatives have fostered entrepreneurialism in science and engineering fields through a variety of interdisciplinary centers and partnerships with the private sector around new technologies...

The effects of this are seen in the emergence of discourses of crisis and pressure which one can see internationally. For example in relation to the Portuguese system Pinto-Celho and Carvalho note how the discourse emerges and the impact this has on individual staff members:

Starting with the Bologna Process (1999), which was presented as a fait accompli and lived as such in the Portuguese public universities, successive university

reforms, together with the more recent rounds of budget cuts in public financing of universities and of research, have had huge effects on the daily lives of academic staff, throwing us in a sea of contradictions, continuous pressures and urgencies. In Trowler's words we have been "sinking", "swinging", "reconstructing" and "coping" (Trowler 1998) according to the circumstances, but there is no time to stop and think about "what is going on here?" (Pinto-Celho & Carvalho, 2013 p. 5)

Individual researchers are now expected to bring in funding with their research, which affects what they can do and places a variety of additional responsibilities on them. In particular, project driven research is highly promoted. Whilst in some areas such as science this may not be all that unusual, in other areas, particularly the humanities, it may provide significant challenges. As such the effects on supervision will be on the kinds of projects and funding available, on the kinds of activities for students and on their and the supervisor's degree of choice. Since there are high rewards for postgraduate degrees awarded there is also pressure to increase postgraduate numbers within institutions and per individual academic. Altbach notes:

The functions of the university are increasingly subjected to market forces. Knowledge that can earn income is valued and supported. Fields that produce little income are de-emphasized or even discarded. Tuition fees are an example of market forces at work. More academic institutions charge tuition fees, which in many instances are increasing. Students are sometimes charged differential fees. ...Research facilities and faculty time are 'sold' to companies and other organizations as a way of earning income – at the expense of basic research that does not earn quick profits. Competition has increased among academic institutions in an effort to lure students, attract profitable research projects and generate prestige. The current emphasis on league tables and rankings is very much part of the marketization of higher education (Sadlak and Liu, 2007).

All of these challenges are related to the demands made on universities to be more financially self-sufficient and market driven. This trend creates an immense contradiction between these new emphases and the role that universities have played over the past century in providing access to ever larger numbers of students. Marketization trends are often in conflict with higher education's goal of providing equity and the chance to obtain skills and better employment to underserved populations (Altbach, 2011 p.11).

These trends are often referred to as the McDonaldization of Higher Education or academic capitalism (Bremner, 2011; Currie & Newson, 1998; Mendoza, 2007) and this drive therefore has ensured that postgraduate activities and research have become institutional levers. As such this then has to affect the entire process of postgraduate studies and the supervision process, introducing new structures, new procedures, greater degrees of control and new ways of interaction. Such impacts are felt throughout institutions, and affect us right down to our individual supervision

interactions (Portnoi, 2009a). It is the way these affect supervisors, their academic identity and practice that is the focus of this study.

For some it seems the system now runs the process and has a strong stranglehold on the process, the inevitability of the structures and of the discourse that is creating new higher education cultures. Yet as Archer (1996; 2000, 2003) argues this creates cultural and structural dopes out of everyone, and this notion can be challenged by those who feel that the essence of humanity is agency and the ability to make choices within the systems. Pinto-Celho and Carvalho (2013 p.5) also indicate challenges to the notion:

Some analysts argue that scholars are “captured by the discourse” (Bowe et al, 1994) of the “University of Excellence-as-business”, “of maximum Throughput” (Martins, H., 2004), with far reaching consequences as there is little room to challenge this new common sense effectively and in a way that resonates with society’s concerns. But as Castells reminds us, universities are subject to “the conflicts and contradictions of society and therefore they will tend to express – and even to amplify - the ideological struggles present in all societies” (Castells, 2001: 212). Discourse is a major resource of these struggles. Its nature is never fixed once and for all but always in flux, invisible and taken-for-granted in some situations, strategically used and/or openly challenged in others...

4.1.3 Training for a Knowledge Economy

The new imperative driving interest in the postgraduate sector is that of economic development. It is argued, despite some scepticism, that increasing the numbers of PhDs will increase national or supranational chances of innovation and therefore, in the emergent discourse, of advancement. Whilst arguably in this age of enormous social challenges such as energy resourcing, water shortages and food insecurity such innovation is vital, it seems that the underlying motivation is more economic and driven by the competitive needs of nations (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012; Wheelahan, 2014). The discourse of fitness for industry and industry purposes is far more strident than that of environmental, social or other needs. The ‘knowledge economy’, which may be defined as: “...production and services based on knowledge intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technological and scientific advancement, as well as rapid obsolescence. The key component of a knowledge economy is supposedly a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources” (Powell & Snellman, 2004 p. 201), informs strategic planning at international and national level. Whilst it may be a contested notion (Blankley & Booyens, 2010; Khan, 2012; Weber & Bussell, 2005) it is the informing factor behind policy promoting the development of the postgraduate sector, and the push for increasing enrolment in the sector as well as improving throughput.

The insistence on 'useful' knowledge, and of training for specific outcomes has been central to much teaching and learning from schooling to vocational education since the 80s and has gained footing in higher education systems. This generally atomistic and instrumentalist approach has led to the emergence of the skills discourse which provided impetus for bringing labour and education into much greater synergy than before. In several systems the insistence on developing "skills" and on "training" related to Human Resource Development (HRD) has led to the conversion of polytechnics or in South Africa technikons, into universities. These institutions, where often skills and trades were taught in a more practical and applied way, have now become an integral part of the university system, being termed Universities of Technology. This allowed those in labour and those in education to collaborate more closely and have greater alignment between the systems. However, the process also hinged around a debate which maintains that in the new knowledge economy it is knowledge workers who are needed therefore people have to be able to upgrade their skills. The need for so-called High level Skills is deemed to be more important than Low level Skills, the usefulness of which, it is argued, is disappearing. Based on the work of Finegold and Soskice and colleagues (Crouch, Finegold, & Sako, 1999; Finegold & Soskice, 1988) the idea that with the rapid development of new technologies there was now a divide between low skilled workers and high skilled workers emerged. Many low skilled jobs or sectors are, or have disappeared, whilst those requiring flexibility, adaptability and high skills, especially in the area of services are more in demand. It is held that the greater number of high skilled workers in a country the greater the development. In order to ensure high skills training it would be necessary for a number of national and other systems (for instance labour, education, and finance) to become more aligned, or integrated and this was captured in the notion of 'joined-up' policy (Kraak, Lauder, Brown, & Ashton, 2006). This would allow greater movement within the system for students but particularly from vocational to academic training or vice versa. The need for much greater synergy between vocational training and higher education was therefore articulated and has led to the development of qualification frameworks and accreditation bodies to assist in this kind of integration, the idea being to develop a greater coherence within the system and ability to move from one level to the next. These bodies also facilitate the greater mobility between systems and nations as well.

The impact of this on postgraduate sectors has been not just a pressure to increase numbers, but to see greater collaboration with outside institutions such as industry, and the introduction of work-based PhDs, and more vocationally oriented PhDs as well as more applied research. This brings supervisors into contact with the more pragmatic aspects of knowledge, a need to interact with a far

greater variety of people in the supervision process and to take on other functions such as project management. These may be new aspects that supervisors need to take care of, although in some disciplines this may be ordinary practice. In the new Universities of Technology staff are suddenly confronted with new demands to become both researchers and supervisors, something they were often not expected to do previously. It also raises issues of what supervisors see themselves as doing, and their own value systems which may not align with the new trajectories. This growing focus on vocational aspects, and a more narrowly practical and applied process offers a range of opportunities but also raises concerns. There is much critique of a narrow focus on a skills approach including by Kraak (2003, 2004) and more latterly by Wheelahan in her exploration of the new pressures toward vocational education (Wheelahan, 2007b). Drawing on the work by Bernstein she critiques the rather technicist notions of skills development and training, showing how it entrenches social injustice and continues to exclude particular sectors of society from really entering the knowledge community. By diminishing engagement with conceptual knowledge the numbers of those who are able to engage in innovation and development are limited (Wheelahan, 2007b, 2014). Whilst such developments may not be inevitable, they are much more likely when resources are constrained and where in particular time impositions create pressure.

4.1.4 Emergence of New Disciplinary Structures

As previously indicated, linked to the knowledge economy is the emergence of an acceptance of a greater variety of forms of knowledge, discussion around modes of knowledge, the kinds of knowledge that will be required to function effectively in this new world economy. There has long been critique of the abstract and highly theoretical knowledge based in disciplines that has traditionally been privileged by universities, and which has supposedly guided much of the research done in universities, and the way that it has been conducted. Indeed, postgraduate work was seen very much as an induction into the discipline and academia in particular. Clearly this affects what and how supervisors work. However, work by Gibbons et al.(1994) posited that this hegemonic grip of mode 1 traditional, disciplinary and experimentally based knowledge should give way to a form of knowledge more suited to the needs of the economy, which is more practical and applied, often interdisciplinary in nature. The suggestion that Mode 2 should be given greater prominence, and that it is vital for the newly emerging knowledge economy, has opened up enormous debate, but has also seen a significant shift in research foci and method. It has introduced new elements into postgraduate and research arenas.

... Gibbons et al. (1994) developed the idea of Mode 1 science would give way to Mode 2 mission orientated R&D was to displace discipline based scientific

practice; problem relevance was to displace 'rigour and quality'; wealth creation was to drive research agendas; and secrecy (in patenting, for example) was to displace open conversation. (Bresnen & Burrell, 2012 p. 26)

The debates have been ongoing and other varieties of knowledge have been explored such as mode 0 knowledge (Bresnen & Burrell, 2012) which looks at knowledge as affected by power dynamics and patronage and mode 3 knowledge which explores the idea of knowledge layers through networks "This is a *multilayered, multimodal, multinodal, and multilateral system*, encompassing mutually complementary and reinforcing innovation networks and knowledge clusters consisting of human and intellectual capital, shaped by social capital and underpinned by financial capital." (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012 p. 3).

Embedded in the notion of mode 2 knowledge is the espousal of interdisciplinarity, a term which is used in a variety of senses (Pharo & Bridle, 2012). Maintaining that many of the world's problems are complex, and multifaceted and need a more holistic approach in tackling them, the bringing together of insights from more than one discipline, interdisciplinarity, is being sought in many different research settings. Marzluff et al. (2003), advocating the power of integrated research, clearly indicate how such a move would affect supervisors. It would require a change in approach:

Developing integrated approaches require effective interdisciplinary teams. Key values to building and maintaining socially-relevant interdisciplinary teams include an ability to: see the big picture, define problems early, develop mutual respect and understanding for diverse approaches, carefully recruit team members, engage in open and honest communication through frequent interaction among team members, and explain complex ideas in simple, jargon-free speech, (Brosman et al. 1996, Nicolson et al. 2001). ...However, to actually change the dominant culture of environmental science from a narrow pursuit of specialized questions with little societal relevance to a truly integrative pursuit of complex, socially-relevant questions, we need to train ourselves and especially our graduate students differently. (Marzluff et al., 2003 p. 2)

This is also posited as one solution to the fact that students take too long to complete their studies, find the transition into the workplace difficult, and have poor interpersonal skills (Holm-Nielsen, 2013). Quite how interdisciplinarity with its concomitant complexities addresses the issues is not clear. It may be that the split foci may in fact mean that a longer time is required to become expert. Whilst interdisciplinary engagement may indeed have something to contribute to the process, this assessment may be somewhat overly optimistic. Lyall and Meagher (2012) raise some of the constraints of interdisciplinary research, especially for new researchers. To find or create communities for support, creating synergies across the different areas, and of networking may be

difficult. Supervisors may find making connections equally difficult, and be anxious for both themselves and their students. Examining different ways of engaging with interdisciplinarity, Lyall and Meagher identify two different forms, academically-oriented interdisciplinarity, and problem-focused interdisciplinarity, the latter being more immediate, and instrumental, the former, reflecting a longer term academic commitment. Supervisors may fit one or the other, or may not be aware of these differences. Thus supervisors may be learning as much as their students in these situations.

Offering guidelines for supervising such research Lyall and Meagher (2012) raise issues relating to building the supervisory team, setting boundaries, developing networks and choice of examiners. Just how challenging this can be is voiced by Lau and Pasquini (2008 p. 552) "The profound degree to which researchers' assumptions, expectations and attitudes (which in turn are affected by their personal backgrounds, training, location, etc.) influences the very notion of interdisciplinarity, and what it involves and consists of, is often neither noted nor appreciated". Such research and supervision can be challenging as well as rewarding, offering exciting possibilities but also bringing greater complexity to the process. In times of increased accountability and surveillance it may create great pressures for supervisors. The issue remains as to the effects of dismantling disciplines on depth and foundations of knowledge. The work of Wheelahan in relation to the strongly instrumental focus in much of higher education, and in relation to the so called "knowledge economy" provides a incisive critique. She notes that whilst on their own disciplines may not be able to fully solve complex problems, the problem may require insights from many different disciplines and therefore it is important to ensure that disciplines exist to provide the insights necessary. Her conclusion is that: "...in undermining the academic disciplines, proponents of 'useful' knowledge are undermining the conditions for the development of knowledge " (Wheelahan, 2014 p. 125). A sound argument seems to be that disciplines may be the necessary building blocks for interdisciplinarity. Supervisors themselves may well only have a disciplinary grounding and experience in the methods and discourses associated with their own disciplines, and networks, where they have them, in their disciplinary spaces. The interdisciplinary experience may be as foreign to them as to the students and may deeply challenge individual academic identities and the projects that they seek to take forward. In the face of such a debate the possibilities of allowing for both team and project based supervision, as well as the more traditional discipline based, individual supervision may be useful.

Pinto-Coelho and Carvalho (2013 p.6) show how the discourse positions certain disciplines, most particularly social sciences and humanities, which would include the performing arts:

... these disciplinary fields tend to be considered dysfunctional (Lima, 2010, Martins, M.L., 2004) within the currently dominant market-oriented prescriptions of “relevance”, “efficiency”, “accountability” and “quality” (Power, 2000; Shre & Wright, 1999). This has had a profound impact on these fields’ institutional financing, position and organization, as well as on teaching and research practices, but more fundamentally it has affected their own identity and role, expressed by a general concern with the future of the social sciences and humanities’ academic practices, and the future of the type of enquiry that they promote (Soeiro & Tavares, 2012; Novoa, 2012).

Whilst insights here may be useful perhaps a much stronger understanding of disciplines and how their knowledge structures might affect postgraduate supervision arises from the work of Basil Bernstein, and then later scholars who have built on his ideas in terms of knowledge and the curriculum (Bernstein, 1990, 1996; Maton, 2000; Moore, 2013; Shay, 2013; Wheelahan, 2014). These may also be particularly pertinent in the considerations of interdisciplinarity and the effects on disciplinary teaching and research. Bernstein’s notions of how disciplines are bounded, his ideas of singular and integrated disciplines, strong and weak classifications and horizontal and vertical areas provide insights into the ways different disciplines work, whether they are more or less open to change, and how these structurings affect the discipline practitioners (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). He provides useful insights into the incorporation of “new disciplines” such as nursing, tourism or hotel management into higher education and the tension with and perhaps demise of more traditional areas such as classics, history and English literature. His notion of classification denoting the idea of boundaries between disciplines is important, where strong boundaries create a degree of insularity and set practices, whilst others were more weakly classified allowing border crossings more easily and more divergent practices. These would affect those practicing within disciplines, where some might have more set processes, and be less open to variety than others. Bernstein’s work not only confirms but significantly extends the work of Biglan who had earlier classified disciplines along the lines of pure/applied, hard and soft, and life and non-life sciences (Biglan, 1973a, 1973b).

All these aspects would give rise to the emergent practices of the relevant academics in each discipline and which would differ one from another. Therefore some supervisors might be more open to variety and flexibility than others given their disciplines. Hlengwa (2010) exploring the connections between knowledge and its context notes that Maton (2009) extends Bernstein through his development of the idea of semantic gravity where the more closely the knowledge is related to its context of use the more difficult it may be to transfer knowledge. She notes:

Disciplines seen to have `...ideas or skills that are strongly tied to their contexts of acquisition, problematizing transfer and knowledge-building remains a pressing concern in educational debates ranging from the humanities (Christie and

Macken-Horarik, 2007) to science (Tytler, 2007)” (Maton, 2009, p.43). Therefore it is possible to expect that a discipline which exhibits context dependent knowledge is likely to be more constrained... (Hlengwa, 2010 p.8).

However, the fundamental shift of emphasis from mode 1 to mode 2 knowledge, and the concomitant drive to dismantle disciplines and heighten interdisciplinarity, as well as to emphasize applied research over pure research, has impacted significantly on research agendas, on funding and therefore on the postgraduate sector which responds to these elements (Oughton & Bracken, 2009). Both the what (the kind of research and problems), and how (how it is researched) of what supervisors engage with is changing. Some may find the pressures for new kinds of approaches easier to embrace than others. Expanding research possibilities should enrich the potential at postgraduate level, but it also brings a host of challenges.

Interdisciplinarity is seen as vital for research which will address complex problems, the type that generally is associated with applied research. It is also seen as vital for understanding and addressing some of the more pressing social and environmental challenges facing the world. The connection to the more practically oriented, instrumental nature of a demand for greater vocational alignment is evident. Essentially, this alignment underpins the argument for different modes of knowledge, for opening the academy to different knowledge forms, for different ways of researching, and for different foci within research. As such it would mean training our researchers differently, and for the supervision process to focus on different elements. This brings with it a great sense of regeneration, enrichment and excitement, but in its all-encompassing thrust, it is beginning to assume an essentialising nature. Rather than providing greater opportunities and alternatives which might complement and extend what academics do, it appears rather to be seeking to replace and exclude. Smaller and more individual disciplinary research, or curiosity driven projects may find it more difficult to attract funding, or gain support. In its origins within a neo-liberal and aggressive capitalism the more purely financial and economic aspects of interdisciplinary endeavours may need to be treated with great caution. It may challenge some of the more deeply seated values that academics hold.

Working in an interdisciplinary way entails working collaboratively, often as part of a team. Through this process the members form networks, which are facilitated by current technologies, and thus may form the basis for ongoing research in particular areas (Hugo, 2012). This, depending on the nature of projects and the developing relationships, shapes supervision in various ways. Projects may vary in the way students are accommodated, they might be able to research individual topics

within the broader framework, or they may be required to work on a more group oriented project (Carmichael, 2011). Some may be driven by the need to deliver within specified times with little latitude. These aspects will all affect relationships and supervision. In many instances it may shift the supervisor into a more managerial role, with a need to manage and co-ordinate both the project and students. Vilkinas explores the shift in perspective from a connective relationship to a more managerial one (Vilkinas, 2002), where she points to the fact that the process has become much more one of managing the process rather than focusing on relationship issues, and she uses the competing values framework to explore the supervisory process . One wonders if the two are mutually exclusive.

It was useful therefore to find that Maxwell offers a challenge to this (Maxwell & Smyth, 2011) pointing out that including a managerial model might contribute toward developing a good relationship around the key processes of the research rather than just being a form of project management. What still remains invisible is how those instances where the supervisor bears a large responsibility for the project, especially when the project is one with deliverables for money, are managed especially in times of heightened personal accountability. Similarly when demands for products and delivery grow the question may arise as to what aspects get downplayed to accommodate new requirements. This may particularly apply to the form and demands of the traditional thesis. The issues are less certain and more blurred in these situations. These emergent practices affect the process of supervision.

The increasing connections with industry, an aspect that is very much being promoted through the notion of partnerships, raises issues of the integrity of the research, and of constraints that can affect the research and the supervision process (Peters, 2006). Indeed, with possible embargos on what and when publication can occur, it may even challenge the very nature of scholarship itself. This idea of connectivity, which builds on older traditions of academic networks (Hall, 1999), is that connections may also be made between academics and other interested partners in industry or elsewhere (Castells, 2000; Scaffidi & Berman, 2011). This opens up a range of possibilities for both research and the development of capacity, but may also surface a host of tensions (Deem & Brehony, 2000). In the British context in education for example, a number of research networks were set up specifically to build capacity (Carmichael, 2011), in other instances the research itself is the network focus. The bringing together of practitioners and academics would be part of that, introducing new players into the supervisory relationship (Malfroy, 2005). Thus partners may have very different agendas and understandings which could affect the process. Related to this, but

incorporating a strong financial aspect, is the idea of partnerships. These may even take precedence over other kinds of activities because they bring both funding and research into the institution. The impartiality of institutions, and their research, may be jeopardized by these relationships. Nevertheless, given new ideas of branding, corporate image, and the need for third stream income universities may pursue these vigorously bringing specific consequences for the supervision process.

Whilst the attention is focused on the sector where previously it was rather under-regarded, this has brought some welcome changes in the form of greater resources. It has however also introduced a host of tensions and issues, making the process of degree attainment and supervision a contested area. It has brought new pressures to bear. Earlier research which had interests in describing and understanding performance at the postgraduate level and which explored reasons for student attrition, student experience and providing a broad description of the sector has now become the foundation for both institutional research, and ongoing quantitative explorations into trends. An early study by Rudd in the British context looked at the progress of postgraduate students and in particular at issues of failure at this level (Rudd, 1985). In his outline of what is gained through postgraduate study he recognized that students learn to do research, gain skills and, that on occasion, important contributions to knowledge are made through these studies. Students may also learn more about possible careers. Finally, students may get gratification through intellectual and personal development, whilst supervisors gain satisfaction and a degree of fulfilment from the interaction. Whilst raising the issue of what might be lost through delayed completion, he clearly notes that when students fail, or drop out there is a loss of productivity within the system. However, whilst the gains were noted mainly for individual benefit, the losses are identified at a more institutional level, and this may therefore, need further interrogation. It is obvious that in any such study the focus would inevitably turn to the contribution made by supervision and supervisors. Whilst he provides a thorough overview of some of the issues that can bedevil supervisory relationships he also notes that the views may be open to some interpretation:

A number of the students I interviewed were warm in their praise of their supervisors. Others described their supervision more as a curate's egg – excellent in parts.

Where there was criticism of the supervisor it was often given at first with some reluctance; though sometimes (certainly not every time) a veritable flood welled out once it started...The range of comments, complaints and shortcomings revealed was substantial. At one extreme, the student was sometimes patently trying to shift onto the supervisor the blame for difficulties that were largely his own fault. At the other extreme there were cases of grave neglect and dereliction of duty. In between there were many cases which could reflect the substantial

differences of view held amongst university staff on the nature and scope of a supervisor's duties and on the best way of carrying them out (Rudd, 1985 p. 79).

Other similar studies have followed, and in particular many countries now conduct their own surveys to note their position within a rapidly internationalizing process. These are however no longer used for understanding and self-evaluation for improvement but have rather become a key part of the bureaucratic machinery pressuring institutions and individuals. Results are compared, used for ranking purposes for both countries and institutions, making any such research and findings particularly high stakes. Drives for throughput use such studies for justification. They are often used to blame supervisors fairly or unfairly. Several other studies follow a similar trajectory showing issues of throughput and linking this to the driving imperative to be economy related. In the USA Rising above the Gathering Storm explores the issues (NAP, 2007), and in the UK The Race to the Top equally shows the concerns over enrolment and throughput (Sainsbury, 2007), whilst in Canada Mobilising Science and Technology provides similar information ("Mobilizing science and technology to Canada's advantage," 2007) and along with Nerad's work in the US provide a descriptive view of the PhDs in particular, and internationally (Nerad & Cerny, 1999; Nerad & Heggelund, 2008; Picciano, Rudd, Morrison, & Nerad, 2006). Through these texts new concepts begin to emerge in relation to supervision and postgraduate study. Adding another dimension Lovitts' study explores why students leave their postgraduate studies (Lovitts, 2001), contributing to issues of retention as well as throughput. Koen's exploration of the situation in South Africa also notes that South Africa has, given its political history, particular problems of underqualified and inexperienced supervisors (Koen, 2007). Koen's study is unusual in that it includes information about both Masters and PhDs, rather than the more usual concentration on only the PhD. More recently the ASSAF study brought together a range of experts looking at South African PhD production (ASSAF, 2010). A key finding here is related to the lack of supervision capacity. Again it needs to be noted that there is little research done on the Masters level process and the kinds of demands that supervision at this level may impose. These studies contribute to the notion that staff are underprepared, and that training is necessary as well as the necessity for greater control of supervisory activities. There is also a need to look beyond just the PhD experience to that of the Masters and Honours as areas where the foundations are laid. The growing pressures cascade through systems from international, through national to individual institutions and participants. What it may not acknowledge are the other factors that affect the process.

In the scrambling for competitive edge nationally, the postgraduate sector has become central. The development of higher education geographical areas and institutional consortia competing with one another has also had a shaping effect right down to practitioner level. As such these can have significant effects on processes. They allow for ease of developing shared projects, the sharing of resources and for movement of students between the various elements within the consortia. This means greater need for supervisors to collaborate across institutions as well as work with a range of students. Yet there is a caution sounded through all this, that this may indeed be another form of colonisation, with the more powerful and well-resourced excluding the others (Baatjes, 2005). The driving economic imperative may have particular consequences for higher education and supervision

4.1.5 Changing Postgraduate Practices, Processes and Products

The heightened pressures on the sector point to the changing conception of graduate education from that of developing individual skills, of individual interest and exploration of areas of specialization or curiosity driven research, toward more team oriented research, and a more structured and taught process (Barnett, 2000). Grevholme (2005 p. 173) comments: "Some time ago it commonly took "half a lifetime" to finish graduate studies and it was not unusual to be over 40 when one defended one's doctoral thesis. The government has now ruled that doctoral studies should, normally, not exceed 5 years". The push then is towards group supervision, graduate schools and similar structured processes working within a tight time frame (Bean, 2005). It has become a production line process. This is something that Gunzenhauser and Gerstl-pepin comment on in an exploration of different approaches to postgraduate processes:

Our roles have caused us to critique the ways in which graduate education embodies Paolo Freire's (1970/1990) notion of the banking model of education, in which knowledge deposits are made by teachers and then regurgitated uncritically by students. For the few doctoral students who are interested only in the credential associated with their degree programs, the banking model is rather convenient, for it demands little of them besides their time...Often, this disengaged form of graduate education resembles the banking model, because it seems to be a site merely for knowledge transmission (Gunzenhauser & Gerstl-pepin, 2006 p. 322)

The emergence of a more structured, standardized and formulaic approach, together with the pressure to take increasing numbers of students, whilst maintaining 'efficient' throughput may well have deleterious effects on the process and intended outcomes. This may be exacerbated by qualification drift, and changes in the preceding levels of education. As all areas become more open in terms of access, and student diversity grows, the educational process and curriculum becomes

more fragmented, pressures to 'get through the system' grow, and time to completion or throughput becomes a driving force, this may mean that students enter postgraduate studies with a more shaky grounding. This also reflects the weakening of disciplines leading to a more dissipated theoretical understanding, thinner knowledge bases. These are challenges which are intensified by concerns over student reading and academic literacy more generally. These impact on supervision, on what needs to be facilitated and supported and what can be assumed about what students bring with them. As assumed prior knowledge diminishes, so the supervision task expands. Since postgraduate study is now becoming part of an educational sequence (what has sometimes been referred to as front end education) where the student works right through an educational system exiting with qualifications before going on to work it is more prone to structure and control, than earlier when it was a qualification picked up later in life, taking on a more mentored process towards a qualification of choice. This is further exacerbated by the more instrumental mind set of many of the students, emergent from the new social dynamics.

Despite the push towards interdisciplinarity many postgraduate dissertations remain firmly embedded within a discipline. Resistance may have been particularly strong from the human sciences and those disciplines which may find more theory light practical engagement more difficult than applied sciences. The way discipline characteristics affect postgraduate processes and supervision form another, but very limited, area within the literature, exploring both the challenges of research, and of training for research in specific disciplines (Alcock & Inglis, 2008; Baum, 1998; Chakeredza, Temu, & Drame-Yaye, 2009; Geraniou, 2010; Haghighi, 2005; Kandiko & Kinchin, 2012; Loughnan & Shackel, 2009; Malone, Atweh, & Northfield, 1998; Pole & Sprokkereef, 1997; Rose, 2012; Sampson & Comer, 2011), whilst other studies are much more generalized in their approach, discussing more generic aspects of supervision. More generalized discussions about supervision abound, and specific requirements in relation to the particular contexts remain elusive. Discussion seldom focuses on the particular problems within the process, for example, in mathematics – or in performing arts - when it comes to topic selection, or conceptual frameworks, or even thesis form. Engagement in teams, or in laboratories require quite different support and guidance, than field work or document analysis and there appears to be little guidance on offer in this respect. Whilst there are definitely areas of commonality within supervision, these differences may be important but generally are quite under-represented in the literature. It is often these quite pragmatic aspects that supervisors have to grapple with in their exchanges with students, and it is assumed that they will be able to deal with these because they have a postgraduate degree themselves. In this age of increasing methodological variety this may be problematic.

This highlights the difficulty with any efforts to develop guidelines that embrace a 'one size fits all' process. Whilst there may indeed be generic aspects, there are also contextual issues which influence the process and need to be taken cognizance of. In presenting students with a framework, what may well be lost are the differences that exist between different disciplines in terms of the kind of dissertation, and/or study that they might do, methods and methodologies, writing, what counts as evidence along with a host of other aspects. Similarly with supervision given the diversity of practices that are encompassed under this umbrella term, the same may apply. Similarly there are major differences between levels from honours to PhD although most literature focuses on the doctoral level. Brydon and Flynn (2013) for example outline some of the very real difficulties in relation to honours supervision. This needs a fine balancing act, providing generic information but supporting it with more specific details and context as well.

Another variant which affects supervisors and their activities is the emergence of different kinds of PhDs and other forms at the postgraduate level, and the effects of this. So for example debate around the professional PhD has been ongoing for several years. These more practice-oriented projects are often based in the work-place, exploring knowledge in practice, and action research has emerged as one key methodology amongst others which allows for the integration of practice, reflection and theorizing. The acceptance of this process as a legitimate research process has been hotly contested, but has grown in acceptance. The change may have come about as a result of greater numbers of researchers adopting it, because of support from outside partners, and because it relates quite directly to 'useful' knowledge. Some emergent issues may link to supervision, in terms of who supervises, does the academic as supervisor have sufficient familiarity with the work context, and issues, do they supervise alone, or are there co-supervisors, perhaps even drawing from the workplace (Lee, 2009) to provide different kinds of guidance? Are there suitable examiners available that understand the process? Is the project an individual one, or a group one, is the researcher engaged in participant research and how does this affect the supervision? It often sees a partnership between the university and institution on either greater or lesser formal terms (Maddocks, 2011). Such programmes often need taught components to provide support to the students, and the final product may be a report rather than the traditional dissertation. All these mean that supervisors need to engage different skills and understandings, different ways of working for such a study. Linda Robinson (2011) explores some of the issues that supervisors face with such doctorates. She particularly highlights the fact that this is a relationship in which power dynamics between the participants may be different. The student may well have greater experience and

knowledge of the workplace than the supervisor. This may create a sense of insecurity for the academic, it may lead to different notions of the roles of the participants in the process.

Once most students doing their doctorate were full time students, working within their disciplines and departments. This may still be the case in the sciences, but in many areas there is a growing part-time contingent and this can pose challenges for both student and supervisor (Evans, 2010; Watts, 2010a). New forms of supervision are beginning to emerge such as team supervision or cohort sessions (de Lange, Pillay, & Chikoko, 2011; Watts, 2010b). Texts are beginning to emerge to support supervisors in the process (Walker & Thomson, 2010; Wisker, 2005).

Other debates occur around performance based doctorates within the performing arts, and we also see the emergence of different types of research products. The questions debated around the relationship between research, creative products and what counts as knowledge in this arena have long been posed in this regard. Such production processes may require particular kinds of knowledge and skills in supervisors (Maxwell & Smyth, 2010). In another example Malins and Gray (1999) explore the use of digital media in all aspects of the dissertation, and this would require quite specific skills and knowledge from the supervisor in relation to the production of the final product and what was acceptable.

Whilst the thesis or dissertation is still the main form or product, other forms are emerging such as doctorate by publication. This means that supervising such requires an understanding of how these processes can be used to fulfil the demands of, or criteria for, the doctorate . In what ways do these challenge supervisors as they go about their daily practice? How confident do supervisors feel to undertake this, how does it affect the demands of their own work and career?

One project is in the process of being completed for Ph.D. submission; the other has been examined for the award of Ph.D. In terms of its physical dimensions, this latter thesis is probably the 'thinnest' of Ph.D. ever produced! This thesis was constructed using a database system, which integrates a large number of visual images, video clips, and text. The thesis is accessed through a designed interface, which also provides an overview of the content. (Malins & Gray, 1999 p. 18)

They indicate that there would be the need to gain new skills to acquire, recording, sorting and documenting data in innovative ways which means that supervisors would need to facilitate this process. Malins and Gray however, also indicate how the system itself may not accommodate such forms easily. Niven and Grant (2012 p.105) similarly indicate the challenges of doing a PhD by publication, or perhaps "alongside the PhD" and discuss the objections and challenges that the

process offered for them as students. More generalized research and supervision guides do not offer much guidance in these instances.

In developing new skills, one particular requirement is that students acquire useful technological skills, both general but also in relation to their disciplines. Technology is being seen as one potential way to ease the pressure of time on both the student and the supervisor. In a study by Winters, Price, Oliver and Pelletier (2012) we see that the study has been motivated by interests in how to help supervisors save time, and therefore begins to articulate this kind of expectation of supervisors. Nevertheless, it is shown that the engagement and use of technology is highly limited even in a medical context. De Beer's study done in the South African context of a University of Technology indicates other limitations, for instance where supervisors provide blended learning opportunities students may not use the resources, or the limited access to such resources (for whatever reason) might affect engagement (de Beer & Mason, 2009). Studies such as Källkvist et al. (2009) also look at mediating the process through technology creating virtual learning spaces which complement the face-to-face interaction (Källkvist, Gomez, Andersson, & Lush, 2009). This is taken up by Jaldemark and Lindberg (2013) who show that by creating such spaces it allows for greater structure and provides a greater administrative element through the setting of deadlines, as well as facilitating a more group-based approach. What is less explored is how supervisors feel about the technology and its impact on their practices. For some it may mean greater possibilities of recording, or of facilitating greater interaction, for others it is an additional pressure to learn new software, new technologies thus creating, at least in the short term, a much greater workload. It raises issues of plagiarism and other practices related to easy access to knowledge on the web whilst at the same time allowing for ease of data collection, management and analysis. The possibilities of greater connectedness, access to information and the effects of this on both student and supervisor seem sparsely dealt with. This is an under-researched area but one which certainly affects supervisors in their practice.

4.2 Interinstitutional or National: The South African Context

All these different trends occurring at international level affect the national systems through the emergence of growing government intervention. However, these are always tempered by the various particularities of the context and which inter-relationship of aspects most affect nations in specific ways because of their histories. In South Africa the higher education system has undergone extensive restructuring as it emerged from its apartheid past. Thus there were two primary driving

forces, firstly to deal with the enormous inequities within the system and in the society, and to respond to the global pressures affecting economic development and higher education more generally. Early policy documents such as the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) in 1994 and the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) and the National Commission on Further Education (NCFE) in 1996 laid the foundation for far reaching changes. A key feature was the importance of creating a single, co-ordinated national system of higher education which served the dual function of undoing some of the divisiveness inherent in the apartheid system, but also of contributing to bringing systems into synergy. The recommendation to incorporate technical and vocational colleges of nursing, agriculture, education and others into universities is clear evidence of this. It also laid the foundation for massification at all levels, bringing those previously excluded into the system (interestingly this happened much more slowly and more patchily than anticipated² (Jansen, 2002). The White Paper, which became the Higher Education Act in 1997, built on these reports and in particular reflected the tensions between the necessity for economic growth whilst attending to issues of redress and social development (South Africa, 1997a). The economic language of accountability, viability and human resource development dominated the document, whilst the language of equity and development was more subdued and has become increasingly so (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). In conformity to international agendas the South African White paper also saw higher education as vital to the economy and important in helping South Africa compete economically in the international arena. Added to this pressure is the role that South Africa plays, in part, as an ambassador for Africa more generally within the international community. The way that the White Paper tries balancing the different agendas of equity and economic development shows in its explicit goals for the postgraduate sector which relates to the high skills debate noted earlier:

expanding enrolments in postgraduate programmes at the masters and doctoral levels, to address the high-level skills necessary for social and economic development and to provide for the needs of the academic labour market (South Africa, 1997a)

This is also played out through the need for transformation, a particular priority for South Africa, but which creates specific tensions in relations to staffing and capacity. In many instances the transformation of the student body happened quickly, but in relation to the curriculum and staffing it has been a much slower and more complicated process (Soudien, 2008; Waghid, 2002). Issues of capacity and training come to the fore where the senior professoriat still remains largely white and

² Policy documents persist in setting targets and indicating massification despite the fact that this has not happened in the dimensions expected or targeted for. Some institutions have even seen a decline in numbers.

male, and the retirement of these, as the ASSAF report and others (ASSAF, 2010) indicate, poses serious challenges for supervision. Retirement, whilst clearing space for a more representative staff body, may also create a false crisis. There may be need for more innovative thinking around these issues.

The Act also set up the Council on Higher Education (CHE) which has a central role in advising the minister on needs and development in the higher education sector, and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) which was responsible for institutional and programme audits and accreditation amongst other things. Thus the mechanisms for a greater degree of surveillance and control were set in place. The result was that within institutions, in the preparation for the first round of institutional audits, there was the development of a veritable plethora of policies covering all aspects including the postgraduate sector. This saw a general tightening and formalising of procedures. These included controlling entry into postgraduate study, who could and could not supervise, the provision of adequate resources as well as the content of postgraduate programmes.

Emergent from the plethora of education reforms after 1994 was firstly the development of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and more recently the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) which sought to bring standardisation and clarity to the different levels and qualifications in the education system as well as crystallise points of articulation. This mirrored global developments in education but could also be seen as contributing to the equity agenda. It was also hoped that it allowed for equivalences between different institutional qualifications to be established and thus ease mobility within the system, and in particular between different trajectories, specifically the vocational and academic (Blackmur, 2004; Lugg, 2008). In the longer term this would allow for equivalences to be established with other countries more easily. This has brought greater structure into the education system, as well as greater bureaucratisation. Such structures allow for increasingly, and centralised control. Chetty and Merritt (2014 p. 49) note: "The Higher Education Act of 1997 spelled out clearly the ANC's intentions regarding universities: central control and ministerial intervention" although in reality this had begun even prior to the Act. This reflects similar developments in higher education elsewhere and a number of critiques have highlighted weaknesses (Barnett, 2000; Lugg, 2008). However, such developments have allowed for criteria or level descriptors to be articulated for each level in order to differentiate them, and in so doing provided some clarity and regularity to what might be expected of educators and learners. Thus supervisors are able to engage somewhat with the differences between honours, Masters or PhDs, and to see how these affect what they and their

students should be doing. Nevertheless, these are by no means all-encompassing and there may be areas that are still unclear. As with all criteria or outlines they are only guides, may often be ambiguous or open to interpretation and remain partial. The lack of clarity is an often highlighted area in research that there is a mismatch between expectations with different participants (Sayed, Kruss, & Badat, 1998). These form part of the structural environment that supervisors and their students engage with.

In 2001 the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE), the so-called Size and Shape document, set in motion a major restructuring which saw changes in institutional status, size and function. It also set a clear path for higher education, and articulated much that would contribute to the development of the postgraduate sector (South Africa, 2001). Priorities were clearly delineated:

Priorities:

- To increase outputs of postgraduates particularly masters and doctoral graduates
- To increase research outputs
- To sustain existing research capacity and strengths, and to create new centres of excellence and niche areas in institutions where there is demonstrable research capacity or potential.
- To facilitate collaboration and partnerships, especially at the regional level, in research and postgraduate training
- To promote articulation between the different elements of the research system with a view to developing a national research strategy (South Africa, 2001 p. 60)

It established the steps for reducing the number of institutions in South Africa from 36 to 21 through mergers, for incorporation of colleges into universities and for converting former technikons to Universities of Technology. Under apartheid institutions designated for African black, Indian and Coloured students were generally underfunded, and the academics employed there were generally expected to do limited research and these institutions were known as Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) or Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs). These institutions were by the mid 2000s in dire need of upgrading and renovation in the least, many were under curatorships because of bad management. Thus mergers were seen as one possible way to ameliorate some of the problems although in reality many of the active academics had already moved or been enticed to former HBIs. Another agenda was that of transformation seen as an imperative, and a concerted effort towards greater africanisation of and within institutions (Chetty & Merritt, 2014). Whilst noted here, and despite the enormous influence this has overall, given the variable understandings and processes transformation is only explored tangentially here.

Thus, such shuffling allowed stronger institutions to attract better staff, and a number managed to avoid being too greatly affected. Several were left unmerged. In reality the strong and privileged became stronger and the others faced ever greater constraints in the emergent dispensation. The often confused political agenda that drove the merger philosophy in the South African context reflects across the varied nature of occurrences. In effect some of these moves only served to entrench and deepen the inequalities initiated under apartheid.

Through mergers then it was envisaged that there would be different types of institutions, traditional universities, universities of technology, and finally comprehensive institutions which would focus more on undergraduate courses and teaching. Disturbingly, the teaching of undergraduates then was largely envisaged occurring in so-called 'weaker' and less well-resourced institutions. Given the imperative to increase postgraduate numbers rapidly this was particularly short-sighted. Research, and by inference, most postgraduate supervisors would be found in the traditional universities. Certainly the ASSAF study shows this to be the case, as well as reflecting that the historically privileged universities unsurprisingly maintained their pre-eminent position. Since research and research output in the form of publications and graduates are heavily subsidized through government funding, the divide between the differentiated institutions only stands to increase. The question may be whether, in the face of research showing the lack of supervision capacity, this helps with developing such capacity, and with the need for such a massive intake at postgraduate level where this could realistically be achieved. The development of a hierarchy amongst staff is another outcome of such moves. The magnitude of the problem was starkly presented in the ASSAF study where the researchers noted in 2007 only 33% of academic staff had PhDs and in the Universities of Technology this dropped to only 12% (ASSAF, 2010). Most institutions will continue to struggle to catch up in a variety of ways unless there is more creative thinking.

Since it is felt that higher qualifications contribute to national economic growth and development, providing greater potential for innovation it is not surprising that there is great emphasis placed on increasing postgraduate numbers. Since in the international arena different nations and regions are compared, and therefore are in competition the pressure to increase the numbers of PhDs has become a national one, as this is one key indicator of "development" and of potential economic progress. This notion is strongly driven by institutions such as OECD, and the WB despite some questions over the veracity of such connections. Thus these ideas drive national policy as in South Africa where targets are set for such increases "To cater for these demands, the Department of Science and Technology has targeted a five-fold increase in PhDs over the next ten years." (DHET,

2012 p. 8) [now the White Paper in Postsecondary Education 2013] and in the National Development Plan: vision for 2030 the targets for higher education more generally are articulated – to increase the graduation rates to more than 25%, increase participation rates to more than 30% and to produce more than 100 doctoral graduates per million population all by the year 2030 (South Africa, 2011). Given the challenges this raises real questions about the effects of these plans emerge.

The pressures to increase numbers and for an increasing scrutiny of supervisors is clearly driven by national agendas, although problems in achieving these are not unacknowledged:

Barriers to increasing the productivity of PhD programmes at South African universities include financial constraints, the quality of incoming students, blockages in the graduate and postgraduate pipeline, and limited supervisory capacity. The DHET recognises that the provision of overall postgraduate provision deserves attention and that we need to drastically increase the number and quality of both the masters and the PhD degrees obtained, This includes providing assistance to some of those wishing to do postgraduate studies abroad as suggested by ASSAF. Improvement of undergraduate throughput rates must be a key strategy for increasing graduate outputs, for increasing the skills available to the economy, and providing larger numbers of students available for postgraduate study. (DHET, 2012 p. 42)

However, for supervisors this is not the only pressure, increasing workloads, the continual cut-backs in both resources and staffing, larger classes (both graduate and undergraduate) and increasing pressure to publish means that this further proposed increase would heighten competition for already limited time. They may also be facing demands for them to engage in professional development programmes and to take on new research practices. This has implications for quality, for relationships and for the kind of processes and structures that are developed to deal with such demands. Supervisors may have to consider the costs to themselves when considering activities to engage in, in relation to the variety of other academic roles.

What much of such research introduces into the discourse are the issues of wastage (Di Paolo & Pegg, 2013; Lo, Leal Filho, & Sima, 2014; Manathunga, 2014), the need for accountability and efficiency, and in relation to supervision it raises in particular issues of capacity, of certification as well as of pressure (ASSAF, 2010; Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; Council on Higher Education, 2009; Dougherty, Natow, Bork, Jones, & Vega, 2013; Hörig, Drexler, & Schmidt, 2012; Mellors-Bourne, Metcalfe, Pearce, & Hooley, 2014; Rivera, 2011). As indicated earlier the overwhelming nature of the effects of globalization on higher education tends towards an essentialising discourse and the interpretations and use of descriptive statistics contribute to this. The process, looked at in this way,

is purely quantitative. Nevertheless there are those who raise concerns about the directions that it seems the sector is moving. Jansen (2001), despite acknowledging capacity issues and other staff problems in the South African context, raises concerns about the changes brought about by the pressures that are being applied to academics. He feels these may be leading to rather more superficial research training that may be more atheoretical than has been the case in the past. These sentiments mirror those writing in the international context as strongly expressed by Gumport (1993 p.242) that the shift to more structured and time pressured processes have particular consequences "...the pressure of finishing tasks on time promotes an organizational climate of a factory floor, or a quasi-firm, rather than a learning arena.". MacLaren specifically critiques the new developments as antithetical to true creativity and innovation (MacLaren, 2012). He points to a range of issues from the managerial, bureaucratic moves within institutions, the harsh employment environment, curriculum decisions and other mantra in place in current discourse as having often been debunked by research which is ignored in the continued pursuance of an economic agenda.

If critical creativity and radical innovation are to occupy a strategic focus in higher education (rather than merely something to which lip service is paid), then policy, structures and management processes should be cognisant of research findings. Such research, as we have shown, highlights the potentially destructive impact of current and emerging practices. Much is made of the need for 'evidence based' policy, yet much of the available evidence in this domain is being ignored. High levels of stress, micro-management, short-term contracts, reduced investment and heightened competition will be counter-productive and lead to a relative decline in the sector's capacity to innovate, to reframe and to play a transformative role for students and wider society (MacLaren, 2012 p. 293).

This is certainly happening in a number of South African institutions via performance management systems, and pressure for measurable outputs which has provoked an increase in unionisation. The message broadly from these descriptive and often comparative studies, and in support of the notion of increasing "knowledge workers", graduating researchers for providing solutions to the skills problem, need for innovation, as well as to the issues of unemployment and economic crises, is that numbers of graduates need to be increased. Institutions are being pushed to increase enrolment of students into postgraduate programmes, and to improve the throughput rate, in minimum time. The White paper shows this "...national growth and competitiveness in the context of the emergence of a knowledge economy is dependent on continuous technological improvement and innovation, driven by a well organised, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction" (NPHE, 2001: sectn 5.1). These pressures are particularly problematic where supervision capacity may be limited (ASSAF, 2010) and certainly impacts on the postgraduate environment, and on

supervisory practices (Vilkinas, 2002). Staff in the various institutions have been differentially prepared and engaged in research activities. In many, particularly the former Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) academics were particularly constrained. The accepted mantra, though, seems to run counter to the rising unemployment rates (not only at the unskilled end of the market) across the world which are creating problems, along with the increasing casualisation of labour. What it also fails to take account of is the human factor that is very much part of the process.

The increasing critiques of the kinds of neo-liberal agendas have been noted earlier, but they may be particularly pertinent in developing country contexts, and in South Africa where intentional and persistent underdevelopment of structures and individuals may take some time to rectify. It may require greater scaffolding, but it may also offer the chance to think about approaches anew. Baatjes (2005 p. 1) sees many of these changes as the results of a shift in government thinking away from liberation ideals, and rhetoric of empowerment, redress and social justice. His argument is that institutions of higher education are "...being transformed according to the dreams of global market utopia – TINA (There is No Alternative)" instead of what they should be, spaces for the pursuit of "...social justice, freedom, democracy and citizenship". He attributes the crises facing many institutions and the growing unhappiness of academics to this embracing of the neoliberal agenda manifest through the issue of mergers and other shifts towards individual responsibility, and what he call a system which "celebrates wealth, privilege and greed and rejects struggles for economic justice, freedom, substantive democracy and equality" (ibid p. 4). Much of this resonates with Nussbaum's position (Nussbaum, 2009) in her concern over the changing nature of higher education. Such critique might be particularly concerning in the South African context when the need for social justice, democracy and humanism in order to rebuild a society is so vital.

Most relevant for this study was Baatjes' consideration of the impact that such national changes can have on academics and the identities of those involved (Baatjes, 2005). The shifts outlined as happening in South African Higher Education in this article are seen as redefining the "...identities and relationships between academics and their students" and I think this could be extended to between students, academics and their institutions. Academics work in the service of the newly corporatized sector, becoming merely employees expected to fulfil their contract, students are clients who seemingly call the shots. The vocational aspects relating to knowledge are gradually disappearing. Given the focus here on the academics as supervisors, and on their experiences he makes a particular point which resonates with some experience but which also highlights the contradictions and tensions in the system:

Academics as suspects: Academics are becoming the new generation of suspects, having acquired this label following the incessant attack on teachers in schools over the last few years who continue to be described as unskilled and poorly disciplined. It is a profession reduced to being most unpopular in our society today. Academics are now the inefficient and ineffective liabilities who work in an ivory tower and need to be brought back to reality and to serve the demands of the market and feed rapacious capitalism. They are under pressure to teach more useful knowledge in favour of corporate profits. Most academics are uncomfortable with and disheartened by changes and the new forms of corporate-style leadership and any resistance by them is described as 'anti-transformation' and 'anti-government'.. (Baatjes, 2005 p. 6)

This characterisation of staff as inefficient, out of touch and generally un-transformed, takes little cognisance of the environment in which they work. It is a discourse which is clearly used to control and exploit. In the South African context, even after 20 years the effects of segregated and under-resourced schooling at all levels still reverberates through the system. The system needed to come to terms with huge demographic changes, and a completely new group of students, black, typically working class or rural entered the system, with not only poor schooling, but also without the kind of cultural capital which would help them succeed. Poor levels of literacy and numeracy pose problems and these affect all levels including the postgraduate one. This is recognised in studies and reports, but does not necessarily change the pressures. In its recommendations for instance, the ASSAF report indicates the following actions that need to be taken nationally:

4. Address the pipeline issues as a matter of urgency, for in the long term it will not be possible to sustain high levels of doctoral entrants into advanced training without a sharp increase in the numbers of students coming into undergraduate education, early postgraduate education, and eventually into PhD programmes. In this regard the following recommendations for immediate action are put forward:
 - a. strengthen the quality of the school system at its foundations, ensuring that literate and numerate students with greater confidence in their own learning proceed to high school;
 - b. increase sharply the number of high-school matriculants with high-quality university entrance passes, especially in science and mathematics;
 - c. build on existing awareness among high-school graduates about careers requiring doctoral qualifications for the highest levels of performance;
 - d. build stronger incentives into early postgraduate programmes for students to continue studies towards masters and doctoral qualifications; (ASSAF, 2010)

The poor schooling impacts on students reading, on the way they study and learn, on the prior knowledge and skills that they bring with them. This means that lecturers and supervisors have to increase the amount of teaching and contact time in order to provide support (Seabi, Seedat, & Khoza-Shangasi, 2014). In order to have a strong postgraduate sector, the foundations have to be

consolidated during the undergraduate years, good teaching and support are imperative, yet there is no recognition of this and its importance something Scott et al (2007) clearly indicate

... it is concluded that improvement in schooling should not be relied on in itself as the primary means of achieving substantial improvement in graduate output and equity of outcomes in higher education. The paper then focuses on aspects of the educational process that are within the control of the higher education sector, and argues that making a commitment to improving output, particularly by means of improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education itself, should be a central element of the sector's contribution to transformation and development. (Scott, Yeld, & Hendry, 2007 p. vii)

This may be exacerbated by demands for high pass rates in individual courses, pressure for rapid throughput, and the marginalisation of writing within the general curriculum, a response often to greater numbers of students. This may raise issues of how well prepared students are for postgraduate study. Supervisors have to deal with these issues whilst dealing with shorter times for completion, greater pressures to deliver and ever growing workloads.

A particular issue is that most of the students are speakers of English as an additional language, in an environment in which English is the medium of instruction at most South African institutions. Despite their facility with languages the specialised English needed for much of their studying remains a stumbling block for many (Archer, 2010). Others however, tend to caution a too simplistic causal equation here (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Liebowitz, 2005) as there tends to be a confluence of language, class, economic status along with other factors that contribute in complex ways. Factors like home language education, where and when it happens, access to resources, writing in both mother tongue and medium of instruction all contribute to how the linguistic factors may manifest. Similarly, many students may be first time students in Higher Education, whose parents or care-givers have little or no understanding of the system at all and are therefore unable to support the individual in certain ways.

Since the divide between rich and poor in South Africa is so highly pronounced, and the numbers of students coming from a rural background are reasonably high the questions of funding for students remains a particularly fraught one. There is some relief for those engaged in masters and doctoral study through national funding, however this is only for full time students, and even then may not be adequate.

4.3 Institutional Context

In the institution that each of the research participants works there are a range of features that affect the supervision process. The institution itself is newly emergent having been through a process of incorporation and merger, and brings together a range of histories in its staff and its practices. Within the geographic region it is one of four higher education institutions, all but one of which are products of mergers. One is a comprehensive institution (ie: supposedly focused mainly on undergraduate programmes and teaching) and the outcome of a merger between a former university previously designated for black³ students and colleges in the area, one a University of Technology, the result of a merger between two prominent technikons, a University of Technology which was not merged and the institution which is part of this study which styles itself as a research intensive institution and is the result of bringing together a college and two former universities, one HDI, the other an HWI. The merger has meant that the larger institution has multiple campuses, in different suburbs and cities in the province, and brings together staff with a range of backgrounds. The college brought staff who may have had varied academic backgrounds, and for whom originally there was no expectation of doing research as part of their careers and whose focus was on the practicalities of vocational training. The other two institutions brought together academics who had a range of strengths and expertise, and of whom there was an expectation of some engagement in research.

Amongst the goals of the institution are African-led globalisation, pre-eminence in research, and efficient and effective management (website). The transformation imperative is also strongly pursued. The progress toward this will be evaluated by assessing the goals, targets and performance indices developed (website, 2010).

As a large and complex institution it offers a full range of disciplines from performing arts and humanities subjects, through the social sciences and education, science, engineering, agriculture, health sciences and medicine. The disciplines themselves however have been structured and restructured with the more traditional disciplines being reorganised into larger more amorphous groups. Faculties have been elided into Schools and then grouped into four Colleges. Programmes on offer extend from basic undergraduate degrees, through honours and a range of diplomas to Masters and PhD programmes. These have been restructured and shaped in line with the

³ In this instance black refers to African black, using the categories of apartheid designation

requirements of the CHE and the HEQF, and more latterly the Higher Education Qualifications Subframework (HEQSF), but also in relation to political and personal agendas⁴.

The recent introduction of a Performance Management system has been contentious, and has seen the introduction of the idea of productivity units in order to measure academic output. This translates into demands for each academic to publish a certain number of articles, to supervise specific numbers of postgraduate students along with a range of other requirements whilst many other essential activities remain unacknowledged and accounted for in this system. The system is driven by quantitative measurement with little regard for anything else. This may have implications where disciplines are small or more contained or where student registrations remain limited. It has implications for new and younger members of staff. It is likely to affect individual practices, seeing possible different emergent practices within the institution.

Finally, the pressure to enrol postgraduate students and to ensure timeous throughput has grown. There are subtle pressures to adopt practices that can facilitate greater numbers and push throughput in minimum time. There are now quotas for staff in relation to supervision, for instance, minimum 6 postgraduates per person. The institution provides guidelines for supervision and the different role players in a guidelines document, and each College or School can develop these further and some have requirements such as the use of contracts with students.

4.4 Interindividual Contexts

The role of supervisor is multifaceted, and for the practice to happen requires at the minimum the supervisor and the student, within a departmental and disciplinary context (although even that has become more flexible in recent time), and within an institution which is accredited to offer postgraduate qualifications. The various understandings of the role of the supervisor provide the context within which supervision occurs and may be more or less formally articulated in institutional documents or indeed may conflict with the ideas held by individuals. Often these could be outlined in university or faculty handbooks, which in the institutional context of this study, has been the case in the past, or as more recently, in policy documents relating to postgraduate provisioning. This may

⁴ An exploration of these issues in a specific context recently published points to this particular dynamic but has not been referenced here due to anonymity issues.

be where incumbents grapple with the various dimensions of the role, since, given the diversity of activity which is encompassed by supervision these documents have to be broadly generic. They must cover key aspects, as well as indicating other aspects which may apply in some situations but not in others. Each institution, and department or discipline would then shape these further to their own contexts. Thus these tend to be listings of expected activities in the form of guidelines, for example:

7. SUPERVISOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section is divided into policies generally applicable to the main supervisor and those generally applicable to any co-supervisor, the respective roles of who should be clearly demarcated at the outset of the research programme.

Main Supervisor

The main supervisor is the key point of contact with the student and, in general, between the student and [the institution]. The main supervisor will generally come from within [the institution] and will normally be a member of staff of the School within which the student resides. But, as may be permitted by a Faculty, the main supervisor may also come from another school or another institution; in case of the latter, it is generally expected that a co-supervisor from within [the institution] is appointed to facilitate the student's activities and administrative processes within the university. [a list of activities then follows] ("Guidelines on the supervision of post-graduate degrees ", 2011 p. 10)

As a member of a disciplinary grouping supervisors also draw on the ideas and practices of the discipline, privy to the range and types of conferences and academic journals that the discipline draws on and contributes to. These establish the kinds of research and approaches more usually taken by its members. These disciplinary networks provide guidance and a support base for individual supervisors as they take up this additional role.

The complex and dynamic nature of the role itself is clear from the number of texts offering themselves as guidelines for practice. With the increasing pressure and scrutiny on practitioners there has been a concomitant increase in the range of 'How to' texts, or 'DIY' manuals, as well as the inclusion of research modules or courses at postgraduate level, and training courses for supervisors. A number of texts reflect a pragmatic and functional approach and they aim to assist either students or supervisors with the process, in the form of practical guides. These range from guides on research, including how to cope with study at this level (Hart, 2005; Henning, van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004; Mouton, 2001), to guides relating to supervising and being supervised (Babbie & Mouton, 1998; Peelo, 2011; Phillips & Pugh, 1994; Taylor & Beasley, 2005; Wisker, 2005; Wisker, Robinson, & Shacham, 2007). Emergent from these is a recognition that supervision is a multifaceted process, and that both supervisors and students must negotiate myriad aspects, academic, personal, skills based, organizational, individual and social, emotional and practical through their engagement. In outlining the roles and responsibilities for supervisors it is clear that these incorporate quite contradictory elements for example support as well as evaluation, encouragement as well as critique (MacLaren, 2012). These are the contradictions and complementarities which as Archer maintains "impinge causally on interested parties" (Archer, 2000 p.10) and reflect through the cultural system.

Thus, Peelo sounds the caution about both student and supervisor guides, for whilst they indicate the complexity, nevertheless they project a more standardised view of the process which does not take account of the real elements of riskiness and power plays:

Morley et al (2002) argue that study guides allow the assumption that doctoral education is known and understood, requiring only clear explanation ... a processual, administrative model offers opportunities for optimism and rationality, but overlooks the riskiness of PhD reality.

Where Morley et al. take issue with student guides, Grant (2001) argues against institutional codes of practice for doctoral education ... specifically for their lack of recognition of 'the place and play of power, desire, and difference in supervision' (p. 16). (Peelo, 2011 p.12-13)

Some however, may find such texts useful, even if briefly, and in a climate of growing numbers, diversity of students and pressures on time. They create a cultural context. In the context where the thrust is to complete in minimum time, the process becomes much more formulaic. Pressure is to move away from notions of relationship. Lee and Williams (1999 p.8) outlined this "... the emotions, particularly emotional distress, are seen as 'noise' in the system, which could be silenced through the development of new policies and practices for the institutional management of the PhD. ... far from being 'noise' in the system of pedagogic relations and practices, the emotional and irrational dimensions of the PhD experience are on the contrary both a necessary condition and an effect of the production of the subject of doctoral study...". Their point is that engaging in study is a rite of passage, a process of becoming and adopting an new identity which is necessarily an emotional process. A number of different heuristics to help supervisors have, however, been developed such as Maxwell's matrix (Morris, 2011), designed specifically to speed up time to completion regardless of the personal toll.

Much of the literature therefore is focused on relationships, and in particular on the student experience. A key function is often seen as the management of that relationship. Bitzer (2012 p. 121) notes in his literature overview that "Postgraduate education support is typically explored in the literature in terms of students' perceptions of their relationship with their supervisors or the perceived quality, concern and usefulness of supervision (Girves and Wemmerus 1988)". It is unsurprising then, that within the literature there is much focus on the relationship aspects of the interaction and how that relationship should be developed or improved, or focused on problems that can develop within the process. Much of this looks at what the student brings by way of motivation, background, or what factors influence the way they respond, with much less focus on

what the supervisor brings other than their expertise or experience in supervision. The cultural aspects of this have thus far shaped the system. Thus the interpersonal relationships, and in some instances the power dynamics involved in those, along with a host of other relational issues are the focus of much supervision literature (Buckley & Hooley, 1988; Heath, 2002; Laske & Zuber-Skerritt, 1996; Lee, 2007; Tahir, Ghani, Atek, & Zulkifli, 2012; Zhao, 2001; Zuber-Skerritt & Ryan, 1994). Some explore the supervision process in terms of the balance required between the emotional and the rational aspects of the process (Firth & Martens, 2008; Lee, 2007) or where supervisors place themselves in relation to that debate (Fataar, 2012). Several studies explore how students characterize good supervision and identify what makes for poor supervision (Haksever & Manisali, 2000). From such studies emerges a daunting list of roles, characteristics and activities for supervisors. For most students, accessibility, and good and timeous feedback, are key elements of good supervision. Heath's study on PhD students, like Rudd, notes that many students (85%) expressed satisfaction – and that with those who did not, it was not clear how far that was the fault of the supervisor or other circumstances that contributed. It also showed differences across different disciplines, notably the sciences (Heath, 2002). Hasrati (2005) explores the notion of socialization seeing this as an important part of the process, inducting students into the discipline, practices and discourses and uses the notion of legitimate peripheral participation to explore supervision. This induction becomes one of the tasks supervisors are expected to focus on. The notion of socializing students into the discipline links to the notion of the doctoral process as preparing the next generation of academics. Chireshe examines the experiences of South African students, part-time Masters students who value supervisors who are patient, supportive and friendly (Chireshe, 2012). A similar study by Sayed, Kruss et al. (1998) explores why course-work Masters students at a South African institution may battle to complete their dissertation. They show that the combination of social, personal, and educational factors, contribute to the problem, and in particular they highlight the fact that "... many struggling to come to terms with the open-ended and independent style of work expected from supervisors. They brought to their work conceptions of the nature of supervision that differed vastly from that of the supervisors..." (Sayed et al., 1998 p. 280) . Thus the two constituents in the interaction bring different understandings of the role. de Kleijn et al (de Kleijn, Mainhard, Meijer, Pilot, & Brekelmans, 2012) explore some of the complexities of Masters supervision through the notions of control and affiliation, extending discussions around the old issues of dependence and independence. Supervisors may be expected to deal with a range of induction and acculturation issues, and the experiences of international students, another constituency that needs to be taken account of, are explored by Cadman (2000), whilst researchers

such as Manathunga explore the multicultural and ethnic aspects that supervisors may need to be conversant with (Cadman & Ha, 2001; Manathunga, 2010) in an increasingly diverse context.

Others attempt to explore the concepts that underpin different models of supervision (Gatfield & Alpert, 2002; Hasrati, 2005; Lee, 2007; Rademeyer, 1994). These explore the ways to balance certain aspects of supervision which are in tension with one another such as directiveness versus student autonomy, dependence versus independence, structure and support. While much of the research exploring characteristics of supervisors shows similar results, some researchers like Morris expand on this to explore how aspects of power also influence the relationship. In Morris' study issues of not just supervisory exploitation but bullying is explored through data gathered from blogs and in particular highlights several grey areas that are seldom identified for discussion, subtle personal interactions which contribute to the power dimensions within personal interactions (Morris, 2011). This literature delineates understandings of the roles and activities of the supervisor in the process, and contributes to the development of expectations, either those of the students or of institutions, as well as of the supervisors themselves. What is less acknowledged is that it is only in the new emergent environment that this may be extended, through demands of training for teaching and for publication that is being required alongside the research training. Once again, these expand the demands on supervisors, adding new dimensions to an already vast array of practices and this may be problematic. What this does not take account of is that the process may vary according to resources, project, student characteristics and abilities and supervisor characteristics and abilities especially within tight and pressured time frames.

These elements may also be affected by the way the supervision process is structured. In a dyadic relationship the full array of roles and activities tend to become the responsibility of the individual supervisor, although in a more collegiate setting supervisors may be able to draw on the experience and expertise of others to supplement their own. This aspect of drawing on outside expertise, which maybe a form of networking, is an area of silence in the literature (Hugo, 2012) . Little is known about how supervisors may extend their own capacity, support themselves and extend the student's range of contacts. This aspect may also be impacted through the increasingly pressured context within which academics work. A more formal possibility facilitating this process may be co-supervision. Certainly this is one way in which I have managed to extend my capacity as indicated in the first chapter, and is an area of learning where colleagues can share information, learn and grow in collaboration. Co-supervision serves a range of purposes, from providing additional expertise, to working as a capacity building process. Where this works as a synergy between the supervisors and

also with the student this may work well, interactions may well be productive, however much in the literature points to the fact that generally this can be a problematic process (Pole, 1998; Wisker, 2005). Frequently, the student focuses on only one supervisor, or one supervisor takes the lead, and this is especially so where the threesome (or more) do not meet together. There can also be issues related to communication and feedback, and students may struggle to know how to deal with conflicting advice. Tensions can quickly arise in such situations.

Other forms of supervision such as team supervision, or panels create a range of different dynamics, whilst most have one main supervisor, with the others providing supportive roles in varying degrees (Guerin, Green, & Bastalich, 2011). It may be perhaps that they have similar roles to that of the supervisor, in equal portion, or they may have set responsibilities, such as critical reader, or providing expertise in a particular area. How these aspects are worked out may vary. Manathunga (2007a) notes that team supervision has become popular in Australia, in order to ensure that students are not at the mercy of a single supervisor. The team in a sense becomes a safety net, yet she also indicates that this is an area that has not really been investigated. It raises the issues of how successful it really is, in her study she seeks to understand the flow of power through the process. Such forms are also useful ways to deal with interdisciplinary studies, bringing together different strengths and expertise. Watts notes that “Team supervision is thought to reduce the risk of incompetence increasing the likelihood of successful completion (Rugg and Petre, 2004)” (Watts, 2010b p. 1). As with co-supervision, despite the many potential advantages, there is a caution about the complexities of the interpersonal and power dynamics that can be generated (Delamont et al., 2004; Phillips & Pugh, 2000). It may well be one way in which responsibility and accountability can be dissipated, leaving the student high and dry. Less explored is the notion of how supervisors experience this process, why they engage in the ways they do thus contributing to the process in particular ways.

Another similar form is that of cohort supervision, where groups of students and their supervisors meet together as a form of supervision. This may be more or less highly structured. Such a process may provide a supportive environment, in which students can develop in a more communal process and have greater agential impact. Interesting examples of these exist from student designed and run groups (Harrison, 2010), through to groups which include various supervisors and students (de Lange et al., 2011; Wisker et al., 2007). This can be one way to overcome the loneliness that many students feel during the process, it can be a safe and developmental process. However, it can also be quite confusing for some who have to grapple with different advice offered, and being able to evaluate

that. The participation of supervisors is important but may also increase the time pressures in a context of huge time constraints. The group may provide a support and training for supervisors, and may serve to lessen the isolation of much supervision (Wisker et al., 2007). The relational complexities also grow exponentially, relations now exist between supervisors in the group, between the student participants, and between various supervisors and various students (Wisker et al., 2007). There are also examples of online support groups which open up opportunities enormously, and connect with the idea of broadening networks.

More recently, with the growing pressure to produce more graduates, increasing numbers, massification and all that goes with it, the examination of supervision as pedagogy has emerged strongly as a theme. This is indicative of a shift in ideas and beliefs which may be in line with the growing formalisation of postgraduate experiences. Whereas often supervision is seen as an extension of research activities, more and more there is a need to understand it as a further form of educational activity. Pedagogy is taken to encompass not only what is taught and how it is taught but more broadly also the learning environment that supports learning and teaching. Grant (2005) in particular focuses on this aspect, whilst Zeegers (Zeegers & Barron, 2012) noting that supervision is a blend of personal and pedagogical turns to explore issues of power and the way this affects the relationship. Within such a discussion then, an examination of various ways engagement at this level occurs can be undertaken from Johnson, Lee and Green's (2000 p. 136) evocative descriptions of the "pedagogy of indifference" to other notions of communities of practice as a learning process (Wisker et al., 2007), to a symbiotic, more developmental process or to more directive and managerial approaches (Vilkinas, 2002). Lee (2008) makes the point that the way supervisors understand the process, and their beliefs about supervision affects the way they supervise. Their ideas are often shaped by their own experiences of being supervised.

One area that has not been explored is the notion of developing expertise, with reference to supervision. Drawing on a body of literature related to novice and expert behaviour particularly in situations which are both pressured and highly variable could provide useful insights (Anderson, 2013; Benner, 1982; Benner, 1983, 1984; Benner, Hughes, & Sutphen, 2008; Chi, Glaser, & Rees, 1982). Here the literature points to the fact that individuals enter such complex and unstructured situations and need to develop understandings, be able to recognise, interpret and respond to different signs and make complex decisions (Hagmayer & Lagnado, 2011; Weber & Aretz, 2012). Much of this work has been done in relation to chess, to medicine and health sciences but not yet applied to education and it may provide useful insights (Hoffman, Aitken, & Duffield, 2009). There

are many efforts to explore possibilities for programmes that might expedite expertise (Aldous, Searle, & Clarke, 2014; Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006; Fadde, 2007).

4.5 Individual Context

Through all this literature exploring student experiences, the developing supervisory relationships and various pedagogical approaches there is one area that has largely been ignored. What is less explored is the experience of the supervisor and their motivations and reactions from within their specific disciplinary contexts to the broader influences on their practices. As discussed earlier disciplines follow different research procedures, and different research traditions certainly affect the way supervisors engage with the process. These different approaches are indicated by Becher and Trowler (2001), and Henkel et. al (1994 87-8):

Research education in science is closely enmeshed with research organization and the work of the specialist research group. The education of the individual research student is shaped by these conditions, which are designed to optimize the production of new knowledge.

In the social sciences and humanities, the research enterprise is essentially individualist, and research education is therefore held to be distinct from the work of the established members of the disciplinary community. The expectations of research students are higher than those entertained in respect of their scientific contemporaries.

This says little however, about how this influences the individual researcher or supervisor (and these may well be slightly different academic roles that incumbents take on. As indicated earlier materials supporting supervisors and students often take a functional approach (Lee, 2007) or focus on the administrative aspects but how individuals engage with their own motivations, concerns and understandings as supervisors and the influence of these is not explored much.

There are a handful of studies that take on the experiences and feelings of the individual in their supervisory roles. Several explore the affective aspect, but mainly from the perspective of the relationship involved, rather than from a personal developmental perspective. Grant (2005) for instance, notes her own rocky times in early times of supervision, although interestingly her descriptions of gut-wrenching anxiety relates more to her role as student, but not as supervisor. Some of her responses are captured in the work she did with Adele Graham (Grant & Graham, 1999), where the relationships between supervisor and supervised are explored. She notes the very messiness of the supervision process, as evidenced by the varied literature, however what this

evokes in supervisors remains elusive. In a similar exploration of how the relationship affects the participants, supervisor and supervisee Alison Bartlett and Gina Mercer provide an overview of their experiences as women interacting (Bartlett & Mercer, 1999). The gendered nature of the interaction explored through metaphor the way individuals may be positioned, for the woman who is supervisor often put into a mothering role, and how the lack of experience of other than masculine and largely authoritarian models of supervision left individuals without alternative models. What this study highlighted was a deeply reflective process on the part of the participants as they had to consider their options within their own circumstances. Firth however challenges those who wish to see the affective taken into consideration when exploring the roles, and rather embraces the role in much more functional terms. Whilst there may be merit in this view, it fails to take into account that emotions, concerns and motivations affect the very way we embody roles and responsibilities, and these in turn engender responses from those we engage with. The formal process only goes so far but leaves key aspects unexplained. Most importantly it is the interconnection of the interests, concerns and activities of all participants, but most especially the supervisor, the student and the institution, that creates the postgraduate learning space.

However there are a few studies which are beginning to explore supervision from the perspective of the supervisor. McMichael explored through the vehicle of a supervision workshop the concerns of both novice and experienced supervisors (McMichael, 1993). Whilst there were understandable and usual anxieties about levels and standards, and about interpersonal relations the study surfaced real tensions related to balancing the various demands made on academics. This was especially so given that they often fulfilled very different functions across different disciplines, as well as noting differential backgrounds between those who were established researchers and those who, because of their histories, were not yet research active.

The debate around experience opened up in Fataar's book (Fataar, 2012), in which the contributors articulate and embrace different supervisory stances, and this makes a valuable contribution in this regard, yet still only really touches the surface. Blass et al. (Blass, Jasman, & Levy, 2012) are an exception – describing the process of practitioners turned academics coming to grips with supervising as they tackle the emergence of the professional PhD. Their experiences and reflections on the training they received, as well as the process of group supervision provide a rare insight. This highlights the changing landscape noting that the emergence of new forms creates challenges for practitioners and academics. Indicating that such supervisors (and their students) may have followed

a very different route into the academy, whilst at the same time often being located in one of the disciplines that Bernstein characterised as more open or with more flexible boundaries:

...academics in these emerging research areas need to negotiate a number of challenges that are more pronounced than in other more traditional disciplines (Kogan, 2002), such as workloads that include responsibilities for large undergraduate programs and comparatively high class teaching loads, a less intensive immediate research environment because a lesser proportion of colleagues are likely to be highly research active. Furthermore, for those who are comparatively new to the university environment, there is often a lack of confidence in academic ability in comparison to professional competence. As such, the difficulties that all supervisors face in developing their supervisory skills are exaggerated within this community. (Blass et al., 2012 p. 32)

They highlight many of the aspects raised earlier in this thesis, the fact that the disciplinary context may affect the engagement; that student backgrounds change the dynamics, and the type of degree and its focus may also create newly emergent practices. In spaces where no experienced supervisors are available individuals developed strategies to support themselves through conversational groups but also indicated that working with experienced colleagues from a different disciplinary base can also create challenges. What Blass et al (2012) indicate is the uncertainty and insecurity that supervising can sometimes create for the supervisors noting that “Because the process is so personally challenging as it stretches the supervisor to their intellectual limit, members of the group started to question whether they were “good enough” to do it or “good enough” at doing it” (Blass et al., 2012 p. 36). It is important not only to support but also to understand this process and how it affects the process of supervision overall. They make a very apt observation which echoes that of literature related to experts and novices:

The reason there is no literature around progressing through the actual supervision process itself is because it is not a process that can be documented, generalised, rehearsed or “taught”. Indeed, it probably cannot be perfected either. Supervision is about you – the supervisor – and how you support and guide your supervisees on their doctoral journey, and you are no more than a tour guide. (Blass et al., 2012 p. 39)

Motshoane and McKenna (2014) explore the contexts within which supervisors operate, showing how these may act as constraint or enablements, and how supervisors draw on their position to exercise their agency within these contexts.

It is clear that adapting the PhD to new purposes as with the professional PhD raises different challenges for academics, and when those themselves come in with different histories, as many do to academia in practice-based disciplines, there is fertile ground for change. New dynamics result in

such emergent practices which not only raise questions about these practices but also enable reflection on the existing practices. Two different trends come together here, the move towards a strong vocationalism driven by the new mantras of economic development, and more instrumental foci from the commercial sector and individuals. The result is the pressure for the newly emergent professional PhD, reasons for which are often couched in terms of a need for relevance.

Disciplines themselves may wish to explore such alternative options, and often are influenced by pressures from their professional bodies. So for example the same issues are engaged by Carr, Lhussier and Chandler (2010) who raise the question about how supervisors develop their knowledge on how to facilitate postgraduate study, more especially when the nature of that activity is changing and they themselves may have been trained in a more traditional mould. Coming from nursing they characterise the professional doctorate as a bringing together of innovation, originality with practice and refer this combination as a “triple helix of practice, theory and research” (Carr et al., 2010 p. 279) which create “unique challenges of balancing academic requirements with praxis” (ibid 280). In particular they raise the issues of academic study often resulting in the separation of the student from the professional environment in which they will later practice. This is hardly surprising given that in earlier times nurses were trained almost completely in hospitals. With the move to the academy a divide began to develop between the workplace and the learning space. They advocate therefore a coming together of the physical and learning spaces, along with the practical element. They then explore some of the ramifications of including others in the supervision process. These processes can occur very formally or equally informally according to them, but they highlight the need for the academic to recognise that they may not have the experience of the practical sites and so draw upon others to complement their activities. This process is also affected by the students who themselves are often:

... active practitioners, involved in research, which is required to be relevant to their practice area, at doctoral level. The context of their research is therefore mostly linked to their area of practice, but there is an inherent reciprocal impingement between practice and research. Doctoral students/practitioners have to develop an agility unique to the setting of a professional doctorate, in that whilst researching, they do not cease to practice, and whilst practicing, they do not cease to research. (Carr et al., 2010 p. 281)

This is largely confirmed by Amundsen and McAlpine (2009) who note that learning how to supervise is a process of ‘privately’ making sense of the process through ongoing clarification and modifying one’s understanding, and refinement of academic identity. Whilst obviously each person must make of the process what they will in relation to their own understandings and contexts, nevertheless

engaging in discussion and a sharing of experiences such as Blass indicates can also assist in reflecting on action. Amundsen and McAlpine also note therefore, that supervision is an inherently social activity. The private and the shared allow a rich reflective environment. They make an important point that resonates with Archer's position on agency (Archer, 2003, 2012):

... identity is evoked through expressions of agency, the individual capacity to perceive personal goals towards which one may direct action (Edwards, 2007), and related emotions. (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2009 p. 332)

They show that experience is a primary source of learning for supervisors, in one of the few explorations of how supervisors learn. The two key experiential sources are their own doctoral studies, and through supervision of others. As research into workplace learning shows (Eraut, 2007, 2009) practitioners make use of a range of opportunities including interactions with others, observation, reflection and questioning. Supervision mirrors this as people take up this as a role and refine it. This then can be consolidated through responses such as pleasure or satisfaction with outcomes, or made more difficult balancing life and work, or often just work demands.

Bruce and Stoodley (2011) explore how supervisors experience supervision as teaching, outlining nine different experiences which they use to develop a framework. This is important given that with growing pressure for increased numbers, and the concomitant diversity that ensues, the pedagogy of supervision becomes ever more important. They outline the following

- Promoting the supervisor's research
- Imparting academic expertise
- Upholding academic standards
- Promoting learning to research
- Drawing upon student expertise
- Enabling student development
- Venturing into unexplored territory
- Forming productive communities
- Contributing to society

Drawing awareness to these different views allow us to explore how these may result in different kinds of relationships developing, and the use of different emergent practices. In exploring these variants it provides a number of alternatives for individuals to pursue, and indeed which may pertain at different points in the supervision process. It may also be that these are affected by the environments and contexts within which the supervision takes place.

Franke and Arvidsson like Henkel et al (Henkel, 2012) also differentiate between supervision as a knowledge process or a relational process and links these changes to the difference between sciences and the humanities and social sciences (Franke & Arvidsson, 2010). The one sees students as part of a collective with its attendant supports, whilst the other values independence, and they categorise the one as practice oriented and the other relation-oriented. Whilst the practice-oriented process enables the student to draw on a variety of resources Franke and Arvidsson note:

In the description of research practice-oriented supervision, conflicts of interest and difficulties emerged that affected the supervisor's twin function of supervisor and project leader. For example, the supervisor may prioritise aspects that move the research project forward rather than those that contribute to good research supervision. (Franke & Arvidsson, 2010 p. 13)

They highlight the difference with the relation-oriented supervision where there is no common research, and the supervisor focuses much more on the student's learning process. In this there is dialogue, mediation and mentoring around the research. It may be the case that the research falls outside of the supervisor's expertise. Supervisors experience these differently, see themselves as achieving something different through different means. It highlights the variability of practice within the given contexts.

Whilst many of these studies indicate the different practices across the institution, and in different disciplines Halse and Malfroy (2010) raise the issues of the evolving nature of the process. What they attested to through their study was that the supervisors acknowledged a difference that had occurred over the last 20 to 30 years in the process and issues that were affecting the way the process was conceptualised. When supervision is styled as professional practice they feel the complexity of the practice is underplayed. The need to reflect the multifaceted nature of the process is important:

... theorizing the professional work of doctoral supervision as involving five interrelated facets captures the intellectual and emotional capacities, and the moral and political dimensions, involved in doctoral supervision but allows for the possibility of each facet being taken up and combined in different ways by different individuals, disciplines and institutions. (Halse & Malfroy, 2010 p. 88)

Through developing a multifaceted framework for supervision they hope to capture practices that are emerging recognising that the pressures in the system are likely to increase. By drawing on supervisors' experiences the frames are more likely to reflect the changing environments in which they operate. This is also supported by Guerin, Kerr and Green's (2015) study which looks at the development of a training programme, but draws on the experiences of supervisors in the process to inform that.

Since becoming a supervisor is the embracing of one role that is associated with being an academic, and an aspect of developing an academic identity, it is this aspect which is seen as the core of this study so that the next chapter explores in more depth aspects of personal and professional identity at the level of the individual.

Chapter Five: Individual and Identity

“We know what we are, but not what we may be.”

— William Shakespeare

“I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.”

— Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Earlier chapters have pointed to the complicated and challenging higher education environment, and the impact this has on all participants in the sector, whether they be student, administrator or academic. In a globalising context it may often seem, and is often written about, as though all is being swept before an inevitable force, the so called TINA (there is no alternative) syndrome (Davies & Petersen, 2005a; Davies & Petersen, 2005b). This highly deterministic view of processes is problematic, although it does acknowledge the strength of forces operating at broad social levels. However it is clear that in the face of change individuals can claim to be “a free human being with an independent will” only partially. This certainly reflects the argument that Archer (2003) engages in her discussion around structure and agency, and the outlining of her morphogenetic approach. The question is, what is the extent of the interaction, and how is a balance between extreme determinism and radical individualism struck? What are the outcomes of the different interactions?

In any interaction with the social and physical environment the individual is influenced and in turn influences. It is this tension between the individual, personal and the social, professional influences that is the basis for the long standing debate between structure and agency sketched in chapter two. All involved bring their own personal interests and understandings, which not only constrain or enable others, but in turn are constrained or enabled by the physical, cultural and social aspects operative over time.

5.1 Academic Identity

The academic environment has a number of resources and possibilities. As academics we have many and varied roles and functions, some of which despite tremendous efforts to capture and pin them down through job descriptions and performance systems, remain elusive because of the complexity and variety within the academic context. It might seem that to define what being an academic is

would be a relatively simple task, but like many deceptively simple tasks it transpires that the variation and changes in environment have led to a multifaceted, multitasked complex activity. In such contexts who and what an academic is, what their identity might be, could well differ significantly one from another, how to draw the boundaries between self, professional self, experiences and context becomes an important question (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009). Others have posed questions such as “How do individuals inside social contexts develop understandings of and for themselves as [academics]” (Olsen, 2008: p.3) but such identity given its layered nature is hard to capture, and is open to interpretation. It can be operationalized in a number of different ways. In particular, in professional, and highly vocational areas such as education and health, individual identities are particularly invested with not only the technical or work-related aspects, but with a complex, personal, social, often elusive sets of embedded processes and practices that concern the whole person (Britzman, 2003; Cochrane-Smith, 2005; Olsen, 2008). Given the societal changes and challenges it maybe unsurprising that research into identity is growing rapidly. This can be seen especially in the area of teacher professional identity, which is an emergent field, as well as within other professional areas, and more latterly in higher education (Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty, & Bowl, 2009).

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009: p. 176) give some indication of some of the challenges in considering issues of identity:

A major hurdle in gaining an understanding of identity is resolving a definition of it, as a variety of issues surface in any attempt to reach a definition. One must struggle to comprehend the close connection between identity and the self, the role of emotion in shaping identity, the power of stories and discourse in understanding identity, the role of reflection in shaping identity, the link between identity and agency, the contextual factors that promote or hinder the construction of identity, and ultimately the responsibility of teacher education programs to create opportunities for the exploration of new and developing teacher identities.

The notion of identity as a unitary, monolithic and stable, if developing, phenomenon, has been challenged, with researchers suggesting that it is dynamic continually updating and reforming (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Lieff et al., 2012). Theorists have begun to explore the way different contexts and different roles affect identity and have begun to delineate the differences between a personal identity and a social identity (Mead, 1934; Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). Doise (1998) explores the way the personal is embedded in the social aspects, and the interaction between them. This introduces the notion of the way identities might be referred to, the “I” reflecting more personal elements, and the “me” exposing more social aspects (Archer, 2003;

Deschamps & Devos, 1998). Archer's notion of the four levels the sense of self, which precedes all other developments, the concept of self which may be discursively constructed lead to the development of a personal identity in which individual interests and concerns begin to develop. Finally there is the emergence of a social identity from interaction of agency with social and cultural structures. Burke and Stets (2009) take this further highlighting a number of areas which contribute to identity variation, such as different social positions individuals hold, or structural posts, or belonging to different groups. Thus when exploring the roles undertaken in the academic context it is indicated that roles mirror social positions and expectations which affect the way individuals behave and see themselves (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010). In being a supervisor there are a number of aspects which the person occupying that position can embrace such as role model, teacher, or researcher and may embrace these differentially given their own personal interests and how they contribute to these (Burke & Stets, 2009: p.118). However despite differences they indicate that as part of a group, members share certain knowledge, skills and actions so there is a degree of uniformity which creates a partially shared identity. The discussion around whether these identities are integrated and indivisible or separate and differentiated is an ongoing debate we will not engage in here (Olsen, 2008; Sugrue, 2005).

The education context may emphasize this issue of integration since the personal and the professional are seen as closely inter-related. Sheridan (2013) endorses this notion of the overlap between the personal and the academic, and that often this relates to the internal and personal interfacing dynamically with the external and social as individuals relate to others in a variety of ways. Taylor (2008: 38) emphasizes a more pluralistic, context-specific and fluid conception of identity particularly given the rapidly changing nature of the world. Given Barnett's (2000) characterisation of universities as places of "supercomplexity", this conception of identity is highly relevant.

Several key authors have noted that in the face of the changes sweeping higher education, marketization, commercialisation, performativity along with others, the academic identity is under pressure. Increasingly there is the danger of fragmentation and that many of the key characteristics of the traditional academic identity can no longer apply and as such it is becoming diversified. (Barnett, 2000, 2005; Clegg, 2008; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). Henkel (2012, p. 7) notes that there is a "...breakdown of longstanding conditions for strong, stable academic identities, sustained internally by structures and cultures of academic systems".

A more pluralistic notion of identity is also embraced by Lea and Stierer (2011). They suggest that an academic identity is more of an assemblage, which draws on a number of traits, beliefs and allegiances which may be shared, but which are also context specific and therefore inclusive of differences between individuals.

So in relation to academic identity for example, Lea and Stierer (2011) maintain that writing is central to the development of identity, and along with Blommaert (2001) feel that through the process identity is negotiated and constructed through the choice and structuring of writing, drawing on available resources. For writers selections are guided by aspects such as topic, genre, purpose, audience and style. Lief drawing on Gee(2001) notes that “Professional identity encompasses how individuals understand themselves, interpret experiences, present themselves, wish to be perceived, and are recognized by the broader professional community.” (Lief et al., 2012: p. e208). The pressures and tensions that shape academics identities Lea and Stierer (2011) note, are the dominance of research as a key activity, whilst other activities such as teaching are seen as secondary. This may be configured differently for different individuals who may prioritise different aspects of the academic process differently. As such then identity is about positionality, how individuals position themselves or are positioned by resources or by others. There is a sense that there is still a persistence amongst both experienced and new academics, of traditional values, a degree of resistance and an assertion of agency, as well as a strong feeling of meaningfulness (Clegg, 2008; Fanghanel, 2012; Ylijoki, 2005) Malcolm and Zukas (2009) for instance, do note that this quite traditional hierarchy is changing and expanding. The role of the discipline in shaping identity (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Henkel, 2000; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009; Rowland, 2008) is strong, and is an example of a membership of a group, in this instance one which tends to have strong and stable structures and practices. This may be less pronounced in the newer disciplines and may be being challenged in reshaped situations such as that in the contextual institution in this study. This may result in quite contradictory influences and feelings.

So despite these really strong influences there are others which also impact on the individual academics. Lea and Stierer (2011) for instance bring into consideration the broader and more structural elements that influence identity:

...the political, economic and institutional circumstances in which academics work have changed dramatically in recent years, but the essence of academic identity has largely remained fixed, resulting in acute tensions and dislocations. In particular, the rapid growth of neo-liberal managerialism in a global higher education sector has exerted intense pressures on academics _ to be accountable

for their work in new ways, for example, to take on new roles, and to engage with marketised institutional practices (Malcolm and Zukas 2009). Fourth and finally, that as a result of these changing circumstances, academics have lost crucial aspects of the autonomy and collegiality on which their identities have historically been secured and that this sense of loss has led in turn to a form of collective nostalgia for a so-called 'golden age', or what Bennett (2001) calls 'narratives of decline' (Ruth 2008). (Lea & Stierer, 2011: p. 608)

They note that the roles, activities and functions in an academic context have multiplied, and that the way they are taken up and embodied challenges the way academic identity is portrayed in the literature. Certainly their position would be supported by the literature documenting the increasing work-loads, increasing stress, tightening time lines and additional bureaucracy affecting academics. In such situations individuals' sense of their own capabilities and their own value in the context may contribute to or diminish their feelings of self-confidence which influenced how they see themselves, interpret and work in situations. It affects the way they engage. The idea that self-concept and identity were one and the same was upheld by Lauriala and Kukonen (2005) and paradoxically they note that identity is both stable and dynamic. They posit three inter-related elements making up identity: the actual or current self, the 'ought', or social self and finally the ideal or projected future self. Individuals engage in a variety of different roles and Curtis notes that each role has certain characteristics which he outlines in his article, and that these begin to settle into idea types. In relation to lecturer identity he indicates:

...they are also more than 'analytical constructs' – they are, to a large extent, the means by which 'lecturness' is constructed and understood within these educational settings. Students and lecturers possess a shared comprehension of these characters - and make use of them to define themselves, their fellow inhabitants and the encounters they experience¹. And through their subsequent interpretations and actions, these characters of lectureship are (re)defined and maintained. (Curtis, 2010: p.60)

Firth and Martens maintain that supervision is a specialist form of teaching with particular roles (Firth & Martens, 2008) suggesting, with others, that roles influence identity. Castells (2004) however, differentiates between roles and identities. In this useful and important distinction he claims that roles emerge out of the norms and requirements set up by social institutions or organisations, ie: are structurally dependent. Identities he sees as internalized values which have meanings for individuals, and represent self-constructions, but perhaps as Archer would have it, not entirely any self-construction. They would be constrained by ideas, and structures in that situation (Archer, 2000, 2012). Therefore identities are strong, stronger than roles which may be superficial manifestations. Castells claims: "... identities organize the meaning while roles organize the

functions. I see meaning as the symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of her/his action" (Castells, 2004: p. 7-8).

For those that have evolved their academic identities through their educational trajectories, they may have entered the academic space as students (such as those that are engaged with the supervisors as postgraduate students), and thus have a sense of the disciplinary and the institutional requirements, as well as a general sense of what academia might require of them. Others however, may enter differentially. Some may have come in accidentally, or after several years in some other occupation or profession. Thus they bring different professional identities, and self-conceptions to bear on the process (Lichty, 1999). Some academics, especially those in the health sciences may have a combined role, such as being both clinician and academic. Thus their academic identity may well be shaped in part by their external connections. These may affect the way they engage the institution, the discipline and their students. They will inevitably bring different skills and understandings to this role which may sit uneasily with the more usual conceptions. Such transitions into roles may be difficult and this is especially so where performance expectations are unclear and when individuals work in situations of isolation. This may be exacerbated where there is a lack of resources. Such lack of clarity may be minimised either through informal processes, or in more formal ones. Training may shorten such a transition period (Lichty, 1999). However the issue of socialisation and enculturation are raised by some authors, emphasizing the difference between training for conformity and alignment and engaging critically with possible variations. She notes that participants may have to find a way to balance their professional values with the requirements of the institution. Newcomers may need to rely on their own experiences and ideas as they enter as outsiders. They possibly have no institutional history, or organisational knowledge. In such situations gaining some insider knowledge can be critical in their socialization. Lichty notes that one response is the "sink or swim" situation where the individual is left to fend for him/herself and is what she terms a "debasement" experience, leaving the individual uncertain, whereas allocating the individual to minor tasks and making it clear that their skills are not valued she calls an 'upending' experience which shakes their self-confidence. It is these kinds of experiences that some new supervisors may have, their interactions with their departments, disciplines and institutions, as well as how these reflect the broader national priorities, are all part of how they shape and are shaped. They enter different power spaces, and have access to different knowledges.

Institutions have begun to recognise that the changing environment, massification, greater diversity in the classroom, larger classes, new technologies have meant that not only new staff need support

in developing their pedagogical skills, but that the more experienced staff equally need assistance. This has seen the development of training programmes which range from workshops to full qualifications in a process which is still highly contested.

Two particular elements may affect academic identity, firstly that not only are there a number of different roles that individuals engage but some may be in conflict with others and it may be the choices that assist in the process of reconciling these into one identity that is important (Wenger, 1998). Secondly, these may change over time, as the ongoing changes in higher education influence different environments, and as personal circumstances change and in relation to individual priorities. So it seems that academics may construct and reconstruct their identities over time – bringing past experiences to bear, using current projects and interests to shape and reshape identities over time. McAlpine and Lucas (2011) propose the idea of an identity trajectory which strongly notes the changing nature of identity which they also link to the idea of intention, and the way intentions may change. Their idea draws on the notion that individuals decide what aspects of practices they will engage in, and that choice plays a key part. This idea of agency links to Billett's (2009) notion of agency and Archer's ideas on identity (Archer, 2012). In developing the notions of identity trajectories they indicate that such would draw on previous experiences, intentions, and relationships, and possible future intentions. Archer (2003) emphasizes the temporal aspects both in her morphogenetic and identity theories, and in their discussion Lea and Stierer (2011) extend this detailing the significance of the three interwoven strands. The different ways of the weave ensure that each is unique in terms of what individuals prioritise, what the fit is, what is desired personally, intellectually and what is institutionally available. Priorities rest on whether it is worthwhile to create a match.

Institutions may assign those working for them a role-identity such as main supervisor, co-supervisor and these imply certain relationships between participants, expectations, and processes. In line with their missions and needs they outline responsibilities, which may or may not be reflected in the discipline expectations. Malcolm and Zukas show clearly how different roles may help construct identities:

...occurs when various actors are transformed into manageable entities that can be transported across space_time _ for example, through the decision about who actually teaches a module or leads a seminar group. This is assisted by the workload allocation form, which is also an actor _ it excludes and restricts, recruits and reconstructs actors. It has an important pedagogic function in this respect, defining for academics what is work and what is not.... the categorisations employed in these forms do not simply record what is happening;

instead, like all classification systems, they are powerful technologies which mediate subsequent action (Bowker and Star 1999). (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009: p. 502)

They indicate that there may be a disconnection or distancing that occurs between official versions which are attempting to reconstruct work, and academics' conceptions of their activities. One of these may begin to question the legitimacy of these new models. They raise the issue that the bureaucracy can be seen as a way of "othering" those who resist or who do not "comply" through their annexation of the discourse of academia. This article clearly highlights the conflicts between what actually happens in the academic workspace and the newer institutional constructions of academic work that are emerging (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009).

That identity may also be linked to issues of engagement, as people engage in multiple various activities (Hasrati 2005; Eraut 2007) how they act shapes their contexts as much as it forms them. In deciding between the different intentions and values when confronted by different roles and tasks (Henkel, 2000) individuals develop or extend their identity, and in the process of reconciling structural conflicts also enact their agency. Välimaa (1998) asks vital questions around how academics conceptions of themselves, their teaching beliefs, and beliefs about students shape their identities, how working within the political and social context affects the identity. These beliefs which may be deeply embedded within individuals, even at a sub-conscious level strongly influence what happens in classrooms and in student staff interactions.

Lieff and Baker (2012: p e208-10) note the importance of individuals' interests:

Stone et al. (2002) highlight how medical faculty who identify as teachers are more likely to want to teach, improve their skills, acquire satisfaction from the experience of teaching and ultimately, student learning. Similarly, other studies have noted that AI contributes to the self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction of educators and has tremendous impact on their behavior in the classroom (Flores & Day 2006; Taylor et al. 2007).

They too see that three factors relate to development of identity personal, relational and contextual. So for example they note that "Participants' perceptions of their capabilities either contributed to, or diminished their feelings of self-confidence. This, in turn, seemed to influence how they viewed themselves as well as how they interpreted and approached situations" (Lieff et al., 2012: p. e210)

Dahan (2007) sees professional identity as emerging from the negotiation between the individual and the environment. She too, like Archer (2003) distinguishes between a social and personal identity where the personal draws on individual mission, goals and values – ie: intentions within a

set of pre-defined attributes which are generally social. How well an individual relates to others in terms of integration, emergent from the roles, status and experiences, is part of that process. Violation occurs when what they are asked to do challenges the idea they have of their function so new social demands result in violation and what supervisors do to integrate the new activity and make sense of it is the process of a new emergent identity.

She points to the aspects of change the need to “standardise, harmonise and enhance the quality of PhD training which would require standardising the PhD ‘production process’ (Dahan, 2007: p. 340) whilst currently the process remains quite firmly rooted in disciplines and idiosyncratic for the most part. The reactions to the need to change she notes range from hostile to indifferent. Many supervisors indicate resistance. Even where developing professionalism as it applied to academia was engaged with, it was generally only with students who were seen as having a promising research potential, for others they were supported through the dissertation as arguably a more instrumental activity. In a scenario where the numbers of students are escalating it may be wondered how many students will show potential and be taken forward. She notes that supervisors in the study distinguished between ‘technicians’ and ‘researchers’:

Dahan (2007) suggests that the changing nature of supervision from developing the next generation of academics, preparing students for academia to preparing professionals for the workplace may be a challenge “There is thus a paradox: how can supervisors change their vision of themselves from that of intellectual guides training future peers to trainers of a ‘professional’ in an undefined (but presumably ‘non-academic career’)?” (Dahan, 2007: p. 335)

She even suggests that this may be an identity violation. Hockings et al (2009) also notes the tensions that academics find in their working environments, between being ‘authentic’ and between their values and their actions, citing Clegg’s description of these as ‘conflictual spaces’ (Clegg, 2008). There may be some confusion as staff embrace institutional commitment to students, to widening participation but find that they are overwhelmed by numbers and with little support, becoming managers rather than educators, and essentially compromising their own sense of professional values. (Clegg, 2008; Hockings et al., 2009).

In the shifting language, the increasingly business like and economically based discourse infiltrates the educational settings, notions like value-added, performance driven, productivity, efficiency, quality and other terminology through policy documents and managerial speak, influences the actions, the language and the understandings of the practitioners. Gee, Hull and Lanshear (1996)

note that individual's social selves begin to be shaped in new ways as they acquire these discourses.

Fairclough (2005 p. 930) maintains:

A style is a particular way of being, ie a particular identity; for instance, there are distinguishable ways of managing or 'leading' in organizations which can be characterized as different styles. Whereas one can see ways of representing as having a purely discursal or semiotic character, ways of acting and ways of being have only a partially discursive character, and entail relations between discursal and non-discursal social elements.

Individuals may use discourses in a range of innovative ways, often closely related to their own values and projects.

Given these differential layers and that identities are, as Clegg puts it, "multiply constituted" (Clegg, 2008) and that they change over time Archer's notion of the inner conversation where the continuous, personal, and the social senses of self, engage with the structural and cultural aspects of the environment, being shaped and negotiated through consideration of furthering individual projects and concerns seems to offer a useful framework for exploring academic identities. It allows a focus on the individual experience but without ignoring the broader environmental issues at play.

The role that the interaction between the personal and the environmental, and then the social plays in development of identity is pivotal. Sheridan (2013) notes that academic identity brings together the personal and social, which develops in relation to interactions with organisations, organisational structures such as departments and disciplines amongst others, and through social engagements. Fitzmaurice (2013) explores the notion of identity as emergent from interactions between the person and their context, where individuals bring their history, and experience into relation with the conditions in which they work and live. This endorses Clegg's assertion (2008) about the multifaceted nature of the academic endeavour which brings a variety of different structures, sometimes operative at different levels – inter-institutional, institutional as well as interpersonal into play with each other. Peterson (2007 p. 475) calls supervision a process of 'boundary work', in which what delineates what is culturally intelligible, and what constitutes academic 'performativity', 'academicity' is "negotiated, maintained, challenged or reconstructed" by individuals as they operationalise this academic role. So taking up postgraduate supervision as a role raises a host of issues related to positionality, power and purpose which creates a huge complexity but also gives access to a variety of opportunities and constraints. In particular the importance and function of individual values is explored by Fitzmaurice, who citing Taylor (1998) indicates that identity emerges

within a moral framework in which individuals are committed to particular ways of acting, related to their values guiding what they strive for. When these are countered this may create areas of resistance or points for adaptation.

Nixon (2007, 20) argues that to be a good academic 'one has to go on learning about what it means to be accurate and sincere, attentive and honest, and courageous and compassionate'. He is drawing attention to the virtuous dispositions that inspire and sustain the academic practitioner. (Fitzmaurice, 2013 p. 614)

Through these interactions, and experience, there is a playing out of provisional selves, of emergent concerns. Sheridan raises the pertinent questions about power relations, whose voices are heard in the organisation, and which groups predominate.

5.2 Identity and Power

Within Archer's description of the inner conversation, and the development of the self and personal identity (see pages 47 – 50 for fuller discussion), there is little which explores the effects of social power dynamics and how individuals may navigate these and perhaps incorporate them into their own trajectories or resist them. There may be some hint of power dynamics in a discussion around costs that individuals may incur through choices they make but this remains quite limited. Issues of power are underplayed in Archer's framework. However, the work of Foucault might provide some opportunity to explore this further. Whilst Foucault's strong espousal of discourse as a shaping element was strongly rejected by Archer and critical realism more broadly, there is much in his exploration of power that resonates with the morphogenetic approach, and with ideas of mechanisms. For this reason some of his ideas will be drawn on here especially in relation to identity.

Foucault, like Archer, grapples with notions of over determinism and struggles to ensure that ways in which agency is enacted are explored (Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991). In much research the concept of power is explored as if power is an attribute that can be annexed or transferred very much like a tangible commodity, and which then exists in hierarchical fashion. In contrast to this Foucault posits a more networked and nuanced idea, and one that is very like the critical realist idea which suggests that several mechanisms may work together in ways which are influential. Power is seen by Foucault less in the political sense, than operative at all levels noting that power is diffuse. The divergence with critical realism is that Foucault sees that power is everywhere, and especially

embodied through discourse, knowledge and what he called 'regimes of truth'. However the idea of a diffused power, which operates through a series of networked aspects, what Graventa (2003 p.1) calls "...embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive.." resonates well with the critical realist layered ontology, of mechanisms manifest through structure and culture which may operate together, or not, to produce certain effects. The 'regimes of truth' Foucault refers to are the way in which various power elements come together and interact. In very Archerian fashion Foucault also insists that the various mechanisms are not either purely negative in their effect, nor positive, but rather that they can act as constraints or enablements depending on individual interaction with them.

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him, belong to this production' (Foucault, 1991).

Thus the link between identity and power is created, that power positions individuals and or their group, and is operational between them in such a way as to influence relationships, is important. Given the emphasis on the student-supervisor relationship it is clear that such an exploration can be important. In this way an individual may have the ability to make choices and draw on particular aspects of power for their own ends. He also saw an almost interchangeable connection between power and knowledge, indicating that knowledge is power. Knowledge can be used in a manner which may offer individuals opportunity or constraint. It assumes a kind of power – or what Foucault called a 'truth'. The way in which individuals access knowledge, and follow aspects provides moments in which they may find new opportunities and develop new priorities, or it may constrain them.

It is recognised however that in terms of pervasive discourses these operate with other elements within society. In his exploration of systems of surveillance, either of prisons, asylums or education and administrative systems Foucault provided a useful guide on an approach to exploring individual interactions with systems that work to define norms and deviances. These then provide points of 'normalisation' and of 'sanction', those that resist or contradict these are seen as in contravention or delinquent.

Whilst Foucault provides a useful addition to thoughts of identity development, nevertheless his arguments around subjectivity, identity and power were often contradictory and in the

battle against determinism, too often his outline provided little evidence that there is any space for individual agency. It is at this point that Archer's morphogenetic approach may be usefully engaged. However, what becomes evident is that even Archer to a large extent does not fully overcome issues with social control.

Chapter Six: Telling the Tale

research design

People need a sacred narrative. They must have a sense of larger purpose, in one form or another, however intellectualized. They will find a way to keep ancestral spirits alive.
E. O. Wilson

This study is focused on the experiences of supervisors, examining the way academics engage with this one particular academic role and their stories of their experience. Informing this was the notion that our particular interests and values as well as the way we experience and come to understand our practices guides the way we perform those roles, and engage with the various opportunities and difficulties we meet, and that this is inextricably intertwined with our understandings of ourselves and our identity. Our own particular projects or ultimate concerns shape our interactions, as well as other roles we may have. As articulated in the first chapter, it may be that many things which occur we do not fully understand, we see only the surface manifestations not the underlying mechanisms, and that our engagement, along with that of many other of our colleagues, may have a broader impact than just on ourselves, or even our institutions. On the basis of these incomplete understandings we make decisions, choices which affect the lives of ourselves and our students. So as Carter and New (2004 p. 4) note “our perspectives are necessarily partial and relative, and so is the knowledge these afford, “

The question for this study was how do supervisors experience the supervision process in a changing Higher Education environment? The focus was on the way supervisors embody this role as part of their more encompassing professional academic identity. It was hoped that they would indicate the way their interests and projects led them to engage with the structural and cultural aspects of their situations:

...in actual events in time, agents are responding to pressures and forces in context-dependent ways, but also in ways which unite them (or make their actions intelligible) as agents (workers, managers) with other agents (workers and managers in other countries). (Smith & Elger, 2012 p. 5)

As indicated earlier much of the research into postgraduate supervision has focused on either the student experience, the supervisory relationship or on broader trends research. There is minimal research which examines the experiences of supervisors, particularly in relation to their own

academic positions in a challenging and changing environment. Given the tension between individual practice and the newly emerging higher education dynamics of surveillance and accountability in an expanding system, the appropriacy of this being a critical realist study allows for an examination of multiple levels and in particular engages the role of agency in relation to structure and culture. This was done through interviews with individual supervisors, eliciting a tale from them of their becoming and being supervisors.

Bearman and Stovel provide several other clear connections to the critical realist enterprise, exploring how the social and the individual interact and how this can create change (Bearman & Stovel, 2000). They maintain:

Accounts of action based on interest assume that actors act with purpose to advance their interests given the information that they have. Interests are associated with positions in civil society, and people who occupy such positions are assigned the interests that are associated with them. ⁵ If actors act in accordance with the interests they have been assigned, then they are 'rational actors'.
(Bearman & Stovel, 2000 p. 73)

These interests clearly share similarities with Archer's idea of ultimate concerns (Archer, 2003, 2005, 2012), although perhaps less subtly, as well as encompassing the understandings of how fallible individual knowledge and actions can be. Their discussion about the social relations in which individuals operate and how these influence the processes also mirror Archer's explorations of both the primal positions that individuals are born into with the shared resources, enablements and constraints, and the corporate placements and roles that individuals fulfil as life proceeds in the social domain. Their interest is in exploring the interface between the macro and micro aspects in society and they do this through narrative, and analysing narrative networks. Their work resonates with this study on supervisors since they were also interested in the difference between 'becoming' and 'being', claiming that narratives of 'becoming' have a structure that is absent in narratives of 'being' (Bearman & Stovel, 2000 p. 72). This study sought to elicit tales of supervision through an interview process, which would provide a glimpse into this particular aspect and experience of one academic role. Thus the idea of layered ontology was useful, the 'empirical' reflecting the sensory experience where the data is gathered in this case, the 'actual' being the events or activity of supervision and the 'real' the structures and the mechanism which maybe unobservable but which influence the other aspects. Smith and Elgar indicate that Elder-Vass also explores how the layered ontology operates. Using his exploration as a starting point they make a strong case for interviews as a useful method to engage with experience. They make the point "...that interviews may not reveal real causes of action and present a partial picture... without conducting investigations into action as

experienced by actors, it is not possible to get insights into the actual and empirical representations of action. Given the autonomy of the individual from structures, we need to have some means of accessing the individual experience, and interviews are one such method” (Smith & Elger, 2012 p. 4). It is hoped to explore the relation between the personal and the social.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007 p. 41) illustrate that interaction, noting that narratives see a coming together of the personal inner life and the social.

This brings us to a third feature of a pragmatic ontology of experience that makes it particularly well suited for framing narrative inquiries- its emphasis on the social dimension of our inquiries and understanding. Narrative inquiries explore the stories people live and tell. These stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person’s inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history.

They do however point out that in connection with critical realism the reality is reserved for the structural or cultural aspects; other levels are directly related to the experiential aspects. These experiences may vary widely. As Steensen (2006 p. 11) notes “ It might be that many people have not really had a meaningful life, or a life to tell, because they have been pushed around from one meaningless event to the next, and they might not very much want to neither remember nor tell”. However, the engagement of the individual with the immediacy of their environment, in particular instances, provides an opportunity to explore their own agential activities and raises issues of how these might affect structural and cultural emergences and vice versa. For each individual the engagement with the pre-existing aspects of their situations brings into play a host of mechanisms that interact to bring into being specific practices.

Trahar on the other hand reflects aspects of Archer’s inner conversation or dialogue, exploring the complex shifts, interaction of multiple roles and identities that occur through the exchanges that she calls negotiations between past lives and present activities (Trahar, 2006). Through interviewing supervisors this exchange between past and present surfaced and provided insights into moments of reflection which begin to uncover the elements that individuals care most about in these situations. It was anticipated that overlaps with other aspects of academic life would also be revealed through a discussion of what Steensen (2006) calls ‘life trajectories’.

In this chapter the methodological issues and research design for the study are discussed. The understanding of methodology is that it shows how the methods chosen and the philosophical understanding of research and of how the world is are related. In Olsen’s explanation:

Your methodology is a proposed set of techniques combined with the underlying assumptions about the world (the ontology) and the assumptions about how to establish true statements about the world (the epistemology). However **methods** are much smaller, flexible things. A method is just a way of doing something. A method does not always, necessarily, have attached to it a whole epistemology. (Olsen, 2007 p. 2)

So situating itself in a critical realist paradigm, the outline of which was discussed in earlier chapters, and drawing on Archer's inner conversation (Archer, 2003, 2012), the study sets out to investigate how postgraduate supervisors experience the process and how that reflects on the broader postgraduate environment. To do this it was planned to conduct interviews, which in their open structure would elicit as far as possible a free flowing response that would uncover how the participant developed as a supervisor, their emergent practices and now how they operate.

6.1 Issues of Design: the Interview

There are a limited number of ways to access the experiences of individuals, especially if those experiences occur over time. These may include interviews, diaries, visual methodologies among others, but the interview remains one of the more common methods for gathering data in the social sciences (Creswell, 2007; McNamara, 2005; Smith & Elger, 2012; Turner, 2010). As Turner (2010) notes this particular method allows the gathering of in-depth material on individual experiences and perceptions, how individual points of view relate to specific topics which makes them valuable for this study. However, as several researchers make clear the interview material does not have a simple relationship with reality and it may not be taken on face value. The numerous factors which affect the interview process, from the relationship between participants, to respondent agendas, power dynamics and the whole questioning process in itself along with environmental or contextual influences make analysing such data a complex business (Kvale, 2007; McNamara, 2005).

There are many and varied ways of working with interviews and the process of interviewing may take several forms, with each form lending itself to slightly different purposes. One form may be highly structured, allowing closed or pre-determined answers lending itself to quantification, another is relatively structured where the questions are set, and from which interviewers may not deviate yet which may allow respondents a greater freedom in answering more open ended questions. Semi structured interviews draw on a set of planned, but open ended questions but which may vary if necessary and, at the other end of the continuum is unstructured or conversational interviewing. The data emerges out of the interaction between the interviewer and

respondent in a largely spontaneous way (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; McNamara, 2005). In this study I chose to work with a broad outline consisting of an initial question encouraging participants to tell me about becoming a supervisor, their feelings and responses, how their early experiences shaped their current practice and to give concrete examples where possible. I also had in reserve two or three prompt questions in case there was need to re-engage or re-direct (see Appendix 1). This put the interview close to the conversational interviewing end of the continuum. However, the dynamics of the process clearly became evident through engagement with different participants and sometimes affected the form.

In less structured interviewing there are a number of dangers, the key ones being that the data gathered may be difficult to compare or relate across the set because of the very varied nature of the responses; the other rests with the skill of the interviewer (Turner, 2010). In such an open structure there is much space for the interviewer to inadvertently influence the responses through their own interventions. This may occur through the question itself, through responses to the interviewees when interviewers are drawn into the conversation or in the prompts in order to keep the discussion going. However, if the response is full and lengthy then the data may be reasonably uninfluenced. Many things are brought to bear when individuals respond in an interview, the primary one may be the relationship and positions of the interviewer and respondent. In this instance the knowledge about the role the interviewer had within the institution and possible perceived connections to newly emergent policies and pressures for training around “talent management” being promoted by senior management may have had an influence. On the other hand for several participants who had had previous interactions with me, they might well have been aware of my stance on these issues. In either event certain responses may have been coloured by these perceptions. This could sometimes be seen in the responses themselves and almost every respondent made some kind of reference to these relationships. In part this might be addressed where respondents provide an input that is reasonably lengthy, in such an instance it may be more difficult to maintain awareness of these dynamics as individual ideas and motivations begin to emerge through the talk. Rapley (2001 p. 310) drawing on Mazeland and ten Have (1996) maintains that they have “...shown how an interview is a negotiation between the extra-local research agenda and the local in situ interaction, documenting what they call ‘the essential tension’ in interviews”. However, having a back-up in the form of some prepared questions may help in ensuring that focus on the topic is maintained. Turner (2010 p. 755) noted that he was able to interact with his informants “...in a relaxed and informal manner where I had the opportunity to learn more about

the in-depth experiences of participants...". It is this that makes interviewing an appropriate method to explore experiences.

The process of interviewing is therefore hardly straightforward. It may seem that it should be easy to elicit information from someone about elements in their life-story, however, the range of factors that can affect the process can be quite daunting. Pawson encapsulates the issues:

People are always knowledgeable about the reasons for their conduct but in a way which can never carry total awareness of the entire set of structural conditions which prompt an action, nor the full set of consequences of that action... In attempting to construct explanations for the patterning of social activity, the research is thus trying to develop an understanding which includes hypotheses about their subjects' reasons within a wider model of their causes and consequences (Pawson, 1996 p. 302).

In the initial phase the setting up of the interview is important. The first contact was through a verbal request and brief explanation of the purpose, given my interest in researching postgraduate supervision, this was followed up by an e-mail invitation to ascertain date, time and place of the interviews. This went smoothly, and all the informants were positive about the process. This follows the advice of McNamara (2005), in preparation the setting was chosen for comfort and convenience, the purpose was explained both in the invitation and again later where issues of confidentiality and the process were gone over, including the amount of time that the respondent might be asked to give.

Having decided upon interviews, and the type, I developed a protocol as a guideline for myself. In designing the interview it was hoped that a single question posed would elicit the required narrative. The prompt designed was: 'Could you please tell me about how you first began supervising, and how you have developed your supervisory practices over time. Describe yourself as a supervisor. This can cover how you feel, challenges and issues but please include concrete examples from your own practice or experience'. It was this, or slight variants, that was posed to each interviewee at the beginning of each session. This was the opening question which usually followed a brief interlude during which time the research was explained, informed consent was obtained, and the recording set up. Then the opening question was asked and the interview began.

In designing the opening question two elements were considered important. One was to ensure that it was sufficiently open (ie: unstructured) and that it was not so abstract that it allowed respondents to discuss in generalities that then had little grounding in evidence (Chase, 2003). The second was to

encourage not only specific examples, to base the discussion in the actual, but to indicate that feelings and reflections were acceptable. Thus the topic aspects were identified – supervision, but located firmly in the personal – ‘how did you begin’, as well as requests for particular incidents which would allow later exploration of story patterns. It was hoped that this would elicit quite long and detailed responses, and I was hoping not to need to intervene – or to intervene as little as possible - in order to limit influence. There was some concern related to the length however it tries to encourage the telling of a story, a grounding in particular incidents and the inclusion of reflections and feelings. The importance of limited intervention was to minimise researcher influence and emphasis and to privilege the process as the interviewee understands it. This allows the respondent a great deal of control in the process, allows them to choose where to begin, what to foreground and emphasize, to choose the most meaningful examples for themselves. Nevertheless, I had some trepidation that the few aspects included in the question might influence how individuals interpreted the process, and the choices they would make in structuring their stories. The hoped for response – an engaged narrative - worked in only a couple of instances, generally with the more experienced staff.

In some instances the interview became very much more like a question and answer session. Some interviewees gave full responses which were often 10 or 20 minutes long and only needed few prompts to encourage them to continue, in others it required a great deal more intervention. Looking over the responses more generally this kind of broad query and limited intervention seemed to make most respondents slightly uncomfortable and a frequent response was along the lines of “I don’t know if I am answering your question” or “I don’t know if that’s what you want”.

Anticipating that not everyone would be comfortable with providing a flowing response, a series of brief prompts were also outlined as back up, but which would change depending on the situation (see the question protocol in Appendix 1). Whilst there were only three additional prompts consideration was given to the order of these. The sequence of questions is always vital, there may be times when a question can be either leading or give insight into what the interviewers agenda might be. The sequence may be chronological which encourages storying but needs to have logic. In this instance the questions moved from beginning, to specific examples and finally to the institutional contexts as a final prompt. Luckily the prompt questions were only really needed in one instance – in others different prompt questions emerged out of the stories being told rather than from the interviewers perspective. With such open and relatively unstructured interviews much depends on the ability of the interviewer to respond appropriately. Dangers lie in becoming too

involved in the story being told, and engaging too vigorously thereby influencing the process both in terms of content and direction since this could signal interests that the participants will respond to. Another possibility is that the need to prompt begins to turn the process into a more traditional type of interview rather than a conversational interview. However, Trahar (2009) also notes:

Research participants will often find ways to tell the stories they want to tell rather than or perhaps as well as those that they think the listener wants to hear. In addition, the researcher herself may well be bringing her own agenda to the interview. She may want to be seen in particular ways, want or need the participant to hear something of her experiences and opinions. This probably happens in any research interview (Trahar, 2009: np)

It is only by being aware, by making the process as transparent as possible and by being constantly reflective through the process and especially in the analysis that the trustworthiness of the data can be maintained. As indicated the very way in which the process is set up, the stance taken by the interviewer and questions impact. Josselson (2013) makes an important point when she indicates the difference between setting oneself up as an 'asker of questions', we get a different response to that where we might set up ourselves as a catalyst. What she pinpoints here is the importance of the relationship between participants in the process.

In gathering data via interviews the effort is to gain some access to people's experiences, and understanding of the world they operate within, recognising that this comes in the form of narrative subjectivities which must then be engaged with through the researchers subjectivity. There is a clear recognition that the interview is co-constructed

In order to assist with this process I organised to pilot the process, choosing a colleague from another institution, who had done some, but not extensive supervision (ie: less experienced). The process went well and the respondent needed little prompting. The data elicited was full, and in depth, with the interview taking place within my offices. Whilst this was a convenience choice of the participant, it may not have provided the most insightful information into the process. The person knew of my study, she herself was engaged in further study. It may be that these aspects may have ensured that in being helpful the process was indeed affected, and not as illustrative as it might have been. Kvale (2007) along with others recommends the piloting process as a means of determining problems in the design, or with questions. The pilot then allows revision and refinement to occur. With this experience, and since every interaction was different it raises the issue that whilst it was useful to pilot the process, what became clear as the research proceeded was that interviews are not necessarily a regular process. Each interview is a process in its own right, and requires the

interviewer to be flexible. Thus in one instance it became a dual interview when someone else was included, in other instances the information did indeed flow, but in several it did not and required further strategies to elicit information without interfering too greatly with the data collected.

In at least one instance, there was need for a number of follow up questions and prompts to keep the information coming. The literature certainly indicates some ways in which continuation may be prompted, for example asking for clarification, examples or other expansion. However, not all situations may allow for that, and it may be necessary to ask a more substantive question to restart the process. In one case in particular, this became the process. Interestingly the respondent was less experienced and this in itself may have contributed to the more limited responses to the question. In this instance the process became much more like a more traditional interview than a narrative. A similar issue was raised by Lieblich et al. discussing another instance:

...in each dyad during the conversations, protocols of the interviews varied a great deal from each other. Some were monological and provided an almost undisturbed narrative. Others were more dialogical and consisted of many question-answer transitions. Some interviewers were very precise in pursuing the four topics for each chapter, while others let themselves be carried away by the teller's stories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998 p. 24).

The influence of the interviewer on the process is primary yet often under-estimated. Whilst the interview may be seen as co-constructed, and shared between the participants the interviewer remains in control in a number of ways, from choice of topic, to how the material will be processed. Everything from the situation in which the interview happens, to the questions developed, the language used, how they are ultimately delivered, the way the data is captured during the session, to the demeanour of the interviewer, the small and often seemingly insignificant responses (these include facial expression, hand gestures) as well as indications of agreement, disagreement, additional questions or comments may all provide clues to the interviewee and influence their responses. It will affect what individuals chose to tell, how they structure the narration, the language they chose to couch their tale within. Josselson (2013) indicates that an interview is the "coming together of two subjectivities" in which multiple dynamics come into play influencing the process.

Josselson (2013) makes the point that the kind of question and how it is delivered may make all the difference between an open and a closed interview. In this situation I decided to make this as open as possible, however as indicated too open may be as problematic as making the question too structured. So the question was open, and it was hoped that the request for specific examples would not impinge too greatly. Thus the question acts as a frame for the discussion that follows.

The important aspect of having a list of prompt questions is not necessarily to ask them – and there is often a temptation to do this – but to have thought of ways to move the narrative on and to ensure that key areas are covered if they don't emerge. Two aspects of interviewing are vital, the first is to concentrate and listen, ensure that you are fully in the conversation so that you do not question aspects already discussed (unless there is a specific reason). The second is to respect silence, and not to rush to fill it too quickly. Often respondents need a moment to think, and to consider how they wish to proceed and an interviewer can lose important information or interfere if they leap to impetuously to fill the silence. In the listening process in this study, there were moments when different questions from the prompts emerged and needed to be asked. This can be quite a difficult process, thinking on your feet, if you are not an experienced interviewer and impromptu questions may not be successful. It is an indication that perhaps there needed to be more prepared questions on the sheet. The first question which mirrored the opening prompt (anticipating that respondents might focus only on the final aspects of the question) proved to be rather redundant. Whilst the questions were listed, an additional rider which was not on the sheet became necessary and that was – 'and what aspects influenced what and how you did X'. This moved from a specific instance and to enlarge upon it. This became evident after the first interview.

6.2 Participant Profiles

Using non-probability, purposive and convenience sampling, eight supervisors were chosen from different broad academic areas, humanities, sciences and social sciences. Participants varied in their experience (of supervision), but were all drawn from one large multi-campus institution in South Africa which describes itself as a research university. The university has a full range of academic areas, including medicine, engineering and law along with the others. It is the product of a fairly recent merger of three different institutions in 2002 and 2004, one college, and two universities (one previously, under apartheid, termed an historically disadvantaged institution (HDI), the other an historically white institution (HWI))⁵. Within this institution there was quite a pool of potential informants.

⁵ See chapter 4 p. 85 for brief explanation of these institutions in SA

Since the interviews would focus on individual experience generalising to a broader population was not an aim, nor was representivity. By providing a range of both academic areas, to gain a sense of different kinds of academic environments and activities that supervisors might work with, and different levels of experience, one gains different perspectives. Since supervision across the disciplines is extremely varied, it would have been difficult to focus on the particularities of disciplinary supervision, however by choosing very broadly humanities, social science and science it was hoped that some elements of disciplinarity might emerge to stimulate interest in further study. This indeed was the case, as in most instances supervisors needed to be prompted to discuss issues of disciplinary influence on their experience.

Experience in supervision was judged mainly by number of supervisions done. The postgraduate level of the supervision was not a key consideration in choice of participants since experience of supervision was seen as a developmental process and was not focused on any particular level. Each participant expressed interest in the project and was willing to participate which was seen as important. As Creswell (2007) suggests it is important to find those who are willing to honestly share information about their professional identities. Whilst experience was important no assumption was made about how successful each individual may have been, or what the criteria for that success might be. This could be the focus for a different kind of study.

Such selection, providing multiple sources, would contribute to the trustworthiness as well as the richness of the data collected, and provide different points of resonance for readers. Two social scientists, two humanities, and two science participants were chosen, in each area one experienced supervisor, and one less experienced. However, during the process I also had the chance to interview an individual in the medical sciences, and someone in the performing arts which were sufficiently different in practice from the other disciplinary bases for me to include these interviews.

There was a mix of gender and race although this was not specifically selected. Supervisors were invited to participate initially through personal contact or phone call and then via an e-mail to set up the interviews. The interviews were all done between 2009 and 2013. The table below provides details of each interviewee.

Table 4: Profile of respondents in the study:

Respondent	Gender	Experience	Discipline	Race	No of supervisions	Position
A+ 1 Tabitha & Tim (T&T)	F + M	Experienced Rated ⁶	Science	W+W	47 & 47	Emeritus professor
B Paulina (Pa)	F	Novice	Social science	B	3	Lecturer
C Paul (P)	M	Semi Experienced	Social science	B	6-8	Snr lecturer
D Theo (T)	M	Novice	Science	B	3	Lecturer
E Julia (Ja)	F	Novice	Humanities	W	1	Snr lecturer
F James (J1 or J2)	M	Experienced	Humanities	W	100-150	Snr Prof
G Shandy (S)	F	Semi experienced	Performing arts	W	12	Snr lecturer
H Priya (Pr)	F	Novice	Medicine	I	3	Lecturer

In two instances the interviewees had come into the institution through a programme designed to groom and mentor new lecturers, particularly those designated as from marginalised groups (the definition of which could vary across different disciplines and activities within the institution). As such they would have had some support in their early years of employment through mentorships and formal courses. In one instance an emeritus professor was chosen because of their experience and ratings as a researcher. One interviewee indicated that she generally worked extremely closely with another colleague in the same school, and that throughout their careers they had worked as a team, and therefore she indicated a desire to be interviewed together and this provided an

⁶ In South Africa researchers are rated on a scale by the National Research Foundation – this is much sought after by both researchers and institutions as they have greater chance of receiving funding from the organisation

interesting reflection on the process. Experience here was judged not in terms of years, or of seniority, although these did tend to coincide, but rather on the numbers of students supervised in comparison to the other respondents. Supervision experience was broadly conceptualised as encompassing particularly Masters and Doctoral supervision. Generally honours was not the focus of the study although several participants mention honours in their responses. There was no particular emphasis on Doctoral supervision, nor was the issue of successful supervision seen as a necessary attribute given in the choices made, rather it was supervisory experience that was key. The issue did however emerge through the interviews in different ways.

In order to indicate the various attributes of the participants in the research table four provides an outline of the individual characteristics for each, as well as indicating the coding given to each. In order to ensure anonymity and a degree of confidentiality a pseudonym was given to each, as well as a letter. This was used in identifying the scripts once each interview was transcribed.

Although in each instance it was indicated that the process might need two interviews, only in one instance did this occur when the interview ran over time and was resumed at a later date. Each participant was invited to participate in the research, and in an initial discussion the researcher's interest in supervision was discussed, and the idea of exploring individual experiences. It was indicated that each interview would last approximately one hour, and that if needed there might be one follow up session.

6.3 The Interview Process

Each participant was interviewed in their office at their convenience, and each interview was taped with the permission of the participant. This ensured that the participant was comfortable in their surroundings, and it placed them in a more commanding position. Given the issues of power and control that are part of any such interview situation, these choices allow for some different dynamics to pertain. Despite taping the session, I also made notes during the interview as a back-up process. Some consideration was given to the fact that taping might be intrusive, and perhaps might inhibit the process (Speer and Hutchby 2003), however I have found previously, and indeed this was borne out in this study and by other researchers, that participants quickly seem to forget the recorder despite the odd moments of checking the equipment. Similarly, making notes might be distracting for those responding, as it breaks the connection between interviewer and interviewee, however, once again despite my note-taking, often connection was still maintained, and the activity

did not seem to interfere to any great extent. In fact, in some instances interviewees seemed to use it as an opportunity to pause, to review what they had said as they allowed time for me to write. All interviews were replayed and I transcribed each one which allowed for a developing familiarity with the material. Transcribing can introduce a range of elements into the process. There may be areas which are inaudible, interruptions, and noises may all create interference when transcribing and affect the quality of the final transcript. Luckily all transcripts were reasonably audible and there was not much interference. In all instances two recorders were used (for safety given possible technological or human error). In some instances the written notes could provide clues or even fill in actual words or phrases where these were problematic. As the transcriber, I made choices about sentence endings, or pauses, and emphases as well as the way punctuation was used. Choices were, as far as possible, based on what I heard on the tape and my own recollections of the interactions, but it may still be an imposition and is part of an initial interpretation. Decisions as to the amount of precision in choice of what to include, all the 'erms' or 'Oks' – repetitions of 'You Know' – or even false starts, whether one transcribes outside sounds, and choice of spelling may all affect the nature of the transcription and subsequent interpretation and analysis. In this instance, whilst omitting some of the stutters, most were included and the transcriptions were done as close as possible to the audio. Silences or pauses were indicated by gaps left. Interruptions in the form of phone calls, knocks on doors and others were noted at the relevant points, as were playful exchanges, laughter, asides and other such elements. These can on occasion provide clues to the tenor and tone of the interviews, or the relationships between the interviewer and interviewee. Lines were numbered for ease of analysis. Within the dissertation, then, the quotations appear verbatim, with as little interference from punctuation, with hesitations and are indicated by script letter and line numbers. In using the data the quotations tend to be longer to give greater opportunity for readers to get a feel of the conversation and to get the gist of the conversational flow. Punctuation is kept to a minimum, and inserted only where necessary for clarity.

6.4 Ethics

Ethical clearance had been obtained, and each participant was invited to participate on the understanding that as far as possible confidentiality and anonymity was ensured, and each provided informed consent. Pseudonyms were used in each case, and care was taken, as far as possible, to protect the identities by noting particularities which could affect identification and finding some way of concealing such detail sufficiently to prevent identification. Thus in some instance names of

disciplines were omitted and indicated only by [discipline name] where these might have affected anonymity. Some aspects of their information might have been omitted where it could have provided identification.

Having taken care of the more bureaucratic aspects of the ethical process, any research project raises a host of ethical aspects from what to disclose, what to share, what to include, what is excluded and why, how and what to report, to issues in writing the thesis and how far disclosure of some aspects might compromise individual anonymity. What seems a simple bureaucratic issue is often much more complex and requires constant engagement by the researcher. This in turn encourages and enhances constant reflexivity on the part of the researcher.

6.5 The Researcher's Position

It is clear that the researcher influences the research process, in whatever paradigm, through the choices they make, through the design and the analysis they conduct and in the way they interact with the materials, people and processes. This is especially the case in qualitative research where the role of the researcher is seen as particularly important. It is often noted that the researcher is the instrument in this kind of research, through the choices of participants, development and delivery of instruments and primarily through the interpretations and analyses they conduct. The influence on the process, as discussed earlier, can occur in many ways from the research design, the sample choice, and in particular the data gathering. Often researchers are seen to co-construct the study with the informants, and interviews are seen as one way in which this is done. The ways in which the interview exchange affects the process are varied, it influences the relationship between participants, the kind of data given, and needs to be considered. In interviews or any human interaction the engagement between the researcher and those providing the information is vital and may affect what is told, how it is told and, indeed, the quantity of data elicited. It can mean the difference between having reliable or trustworthy data, or not. However, in the short term a brief outline of the profile of the interviewer and some potential influences that emerge from that is provided. Steensen (2006 p. 10) notes that one just cannot "...just take it for granted that you can just ask people about their lives and just take the answer at face value".

In this case as the interviewer I had run a course on postgraduate supervision, for some years in the institution, along with other courses on teaching and learning and higher education. I had also taken part in a number of workshops offered in different faculties and departments in the institution over

several years. In this capacity, and through engagement with all faculties in the institution I had interacted with many of the informants although in various ways, and so was known to all of them prior to the interviews. Some of the informants several years previously had taken courses I had facilitated. In other cases some informants had contributed to workshops or conferences on the topic of supervision, either those run by myself or which I had attended. Finally, in the remainder of cases the informants were colleagues, and were in contact through our working together, attending the same meetings or other similar activities. Although none of these relationships were long term or close, they inevitably influence the interaction because there is a pre-existing relationship and this enters into the process. In most cases, it appeared that the relationships all seemed to be collegial however it pays to be constantly aware of the issues of power, although as Trahar (2009) notes the power within any interview situation shifts constantly. Almost all of the respondents acknowledged this position through reference to this other role that I had, through commenting on the courses, or to their own contributions in that regard. Despite this it did not seem to loom large in discussion, or to be a strong influence. Smith and Elger (2012 p.22) indicate how strongly the interview process can reflect on the process of the personal projects individuals have in relation to their practice:

Through the process of the interview the respondent is both recollecting and thinking through past actions, including options not taken, and to some extent anticipating criticisms and justifying the actions he took. As such he is rehearsing his own 'project' – how he fitted into the actions taken, as well as the outcomes...

6.6 Data Analysis

Having gathered the data, a first round of interpretation was to transcribe the interviews or narratives. Once transcribed it is necessary then to begin to work with the data, trying initially to get an holistic idea of the data, before working to divide up the data through categorisation. Whilst indicating that generally in traditional terms we consider the initial process as one of data reduction Lyn Richards makes a useful observation about coding qualitative data:

But *qualitative* coding is about data *retention*. The goal is to learn from the data, to keep revisiting it till you understand the patterns and explanations. So you need to retain the data records, or the relevant parts of them, until they are fully understood. Coding is not merely to label all the parts of documents about a topic, but rather to bring them together so they can be reviewed, and your thinking about the topic developed.

This sort of coding is more like the filing techniques by which we sort everyday information and ensure access to everything about a topic (Richards, 2005 p. 86).

This highlights the need that with such data it is necessary to work and rework it, between sessions of reflection. Open coding was used to develop a range of categories in the process of data reduction, later to be conflated into a smaller set or more inclusive themes. This inductive process was conducted along with a more a priori process which sought to identify which aspects of the story linked to past, present and future activities, and identify aspects which related to different levels on an empirical, actual and real level. Finally, it is bringing these various categories and divisions into some kind of relationship with each other:

The story-line may also include the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that Clandinin and Connelly have developed. These include: the personal and social indicating the interaction; the past, present and future (referring to continuity); and the place (meaning situation). Information about the setting or context of the participants' experiences may also be included in the storyline. Beyond the chronology, the researchers may look for themes that emerge from the study in order to construct the meaning of the story. (Liamputtong, 2009)

The reworking and reconstructing particularly within the theoretical frames chosen to assist is one way of moving beyond the data. As indicated earlier, critical realists recognise that understanding and interpretation must move beyond the observable, the appearance and the literal, to deeper levels in order to engage the underlying mechanisms that maybe causing manifestations. They do this through two processes that of abduction and retroduction, which Danermark et al call 'very important tools' (Danermark et al., 2002 p.1), which they call 'modes of inference', both designed to help get to these deeper, less visible and obvious levels.

6.6.1 Abduction

In a discussion about an old debate on generalizability, the drawing of inferences from data to make more universal knowledge claims, allowing for truth claims and leading towards being able to predict is often central to research writing. The tension between the specific and unique and the general has been embodied in different kinds of research approaches. In relation to the activity that most researchers engage in when they are analysing data Danermark et al notes " What we call 'inference' is description of various procedures, ways of reasoning and arguing applied when we in science relate the particular to the general. Characteristic of inference is that from one thing conclusions are drawn about something else" (Danermark et al., 2002 p. 75). The issue however that has engaged critical realists has been how a single event or experience can be seen as manifestations or examples of more general structures or mechanisms. However, Ryan et al (Ryan, Tahtinen, Vanharanta, & Mainela, 2012) the point is made studying such complex relationships in order to identify the conditions that enable them may require that several events be explored. In my

study experiences of supervising postgraduate students are related to ideas of supervision, research training and to economic and national development. It is in the shift between the general and specific that theory becomes most central. It is claimed that neither deduction (which says nothing new about reality) nor induction from a specific instance can be used singly in these instances. The work that is drawn on is that of Charles Pierce who articulated the concept of abduction (Danermark et al., 2002p. 89) and who felt that the process of abduction involved “redescription or recontextualization”. By beginning with a theory or conceptual frame, much which in this case is provided by Margaret Archer’s Social theory, the interpretation of the occurrence or empirical aspect provides us with a new interpretation by articulating new connections and relations which provide insight into the way we can understand the phenomenon under scrutiny. What is required is to find the sequencing of activities, and define the events themselves in order to come to an understanding of the nature of the relationships themselves. Sayer (1992 p. 112) maintains that such an explanation moves gradually “from actions through reasons through rules and thence to structure”. Since supervision can be seen as an entity or mechanism that can have emergent properties there is a need to come to an understanding of its properties in its many manifestations.

6.6.2 Retroduction

Having identified possible structures or mechanisms through recontextualisation, or redescription it remains to come to a greater understanding of these, and thus important to identify what is characteristic of these structures and how they themselves are constituted. Danermark et al (2002 p. 96) describe it as “Retroduction is about advancing from one thing (empirical observation of events) and arriving at something different (a conceptualization of transfactual conditions)” .

Through asking pivotal questions the researcher may move towards greater clarity (Danermark et al., 2002). Some of these questions have been raised earlier but may include:

- What must the world (or perhaps social conditions) be like for X to exist in its current forms?
- What must the context be like for X to be possible?
- How do we determine certain structures and mechanism but not others make up the conditions for X to be possible?

Through this process of questioning and reflection it may be possible to retroduce down to structures and mechanisms at the level of the Real which as Bhaskar (1998) indicates may be quite difficult to identify.

6.7 Working with the data

Thus using the process of abduction and retroduction the data was processed and interpretation was engaged. This with critical realism may be difficult given that there is little to guide the application of a critical realist methodology. It moves from the actual data, being mindful that the data does not simply mirror reality, but that researchers need to make the transition from data to aspects of causality towards an explanation. To move from description to explanation requires a process of questioning, and in critical realism as indicated earlier, this may come from the theories being engaged, the lenses one chooses to look with, and/or through a process of induction drawing inference from the data. In the initial instance the data was transcribed, a first stage interpretation in itself. Each one was explored to develop a rich understanding of each individual tale, and an indication of areas which were emphasized, as well as issues of interest for the researcher. Links to the literature were made. This shows the interactive and iterative nature of working with data, and the influence that the researcher has within the process. At all times the key questions and the data were focal as interrogating mechanisms for any interpretation. In the second round each description was compared with the others. This allowed for common areas of emphasis to be noted, links to the literature leading to identification of broader common issues, but also for aspects which were particular, or different to be noted. Areas of surprise or difference are as important in such a process as key areas of emphasis – in particular they may provide an indicator of some underlying mechanism that has been dormant in other examples. These are the clues that researchers seek. In this way categories, and sub-categories began to emerge. Descriptions of immediate interest for the respondents were reflected through their own personal stories of becoming supervisors.

Next in a process of retroduction, having compared different instances the data can be explored through a series of questions – what happened (why did it happen that way), what could happen and what hasn't happened. Since an event is a moment when mechanisms are actualised, it is important to explore such moments, although as Ryan (Ryan et al., 2012 p. 306) notes:

While a processual approach offers a useful organizing framework to aid in the analysis ..., from a critical realist perspective it remains overly empirical in nature; that is, it does not acknowledge that while events or processes may themselves be observable, the powers (ability to create change) and liabilities (susceptibility to be changed) enacted by mechanisms may not be observable (Sayer, 1992).

and thus the questioning process allows the researcher to move beyond the data itself.

Working on the narratives, and exploring the sequence of actions and activities, through questioning the researcher identifies a variety of possible explanations, and draws on both theory and the data to make choices related to different interpretations. Key influences that individual supervisors engaged were identified and discussed in relation to their engagement with their social environment, and the potential explanations here indicate the potential for multiple interpretations, but also to the way different mechanisms come into play in relation to individual cases. Two processes were important, working closely with the data at both an individual level (ie: transcript by transcript) and comparatively helped to identify and refine initial categories. A constant questioning process, with the researcher asking question of the data from a variety of angles, what are structures how are they reflected, what are cultural influences how are they reflected, what are the moments of agency reflected through the tales and with what consequences. At the next level of questioning were two key questions, why did this happen – what were the drivers of action, and how can these drivers be explained? At the same time it behoves the researcher to recognise that the data itself is a “fallible description of events that have occurred” (Ryan et al., 2012 p. 305). The process is outlined in the diagram below adapted from Ryan and from the work of Crinson (2007) both of whom offer useful if rare models of how social realist methods might be operationalised.

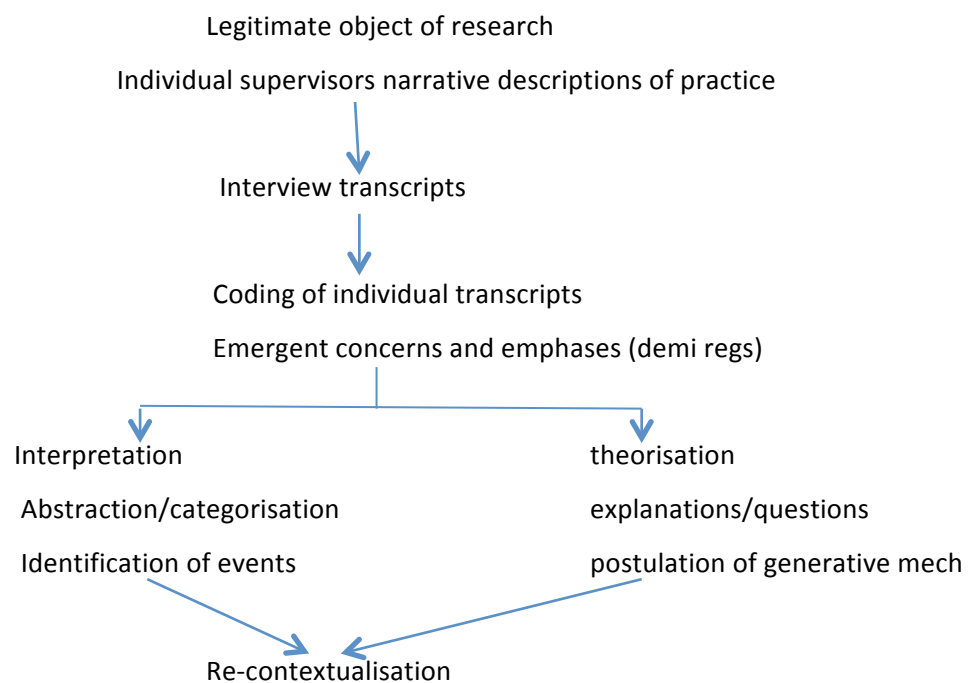


Figure 10 Analytical framework
(adapted from (Crinson, 2007; Ryan et al., 2012)

6.8 Trustworthiness and Credibility

In traditional and science research situations there are clear procedures taken to ensure objectivity and therefore the rigor of the research. The standard processes and ways of working contribute to the reliability and validity of the study, and that results or findings can be checked. The ability to replicate a study and see what the outcomes are and if they match the claimed results in the original study are highly valued in such research. These practices have been long established, but are much less applicable to the changeable situations and contexts found in social research, where, in particular accurate replicability is not generally achievable. There has been much in the literature that reflects on this (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2005; Eisner, 2001; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & Pierre, 2007). In relation to qualitative research, however, it is much more a case of the trustworthiness and credibility of the process (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006), of how far the conclusions drawn from the data can be trusted as well as the quality of the data used. In establishing this credibility it reflects the relationship between, and understandings of, the mechanisms and social relations explaining the phenomena under examination. In engaging in research it is necessary to have a systematic and precise process carefully documented for the purposes of accountability. This is what Freeman et al (2007) term the “descriptive work”. They note that this careful description requires the explication of: “...(a) thorough description of design and methods in reports, (b) adequate demonstration of the relationship of claims to data, and (c) thoughtful consideration by the researcher of the strengths and limitations of the study” (Freeman et al., 2007 p. 28). They indicate another set of criteria outlined by Lincoln (2002 p.9 quoted in Freeman et al 2007) which relates to the need for the researchers to have a strong connection and a degree of involvement with the issues, the attainment of enough distance to overcome personal interests, and most importantly that any claims made as a result of the study should be supported by “an adequate selection” of data from the total data set or corpus. In this instance my own experiences of becoming a supervisor, as well as challenges in this regard in part motivated the study, as my tale in the opening chapter attests. The tale was included not only to raise issues, but also to indicate my own intense relationship with the topic. The issue of distance came with questioning, and with a constant reflexive questioning, in particular about if this was skewing my engagement with the process. Data was collected from multiple sources and provides an opportunity to see different facets of a phenomenon and present these differently. This is sometimes referred to as crystallisation or triangulation. The notion of crystallisation was first introduced by Laurel Richardson (2000) and is linked to reflexivity “Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more

and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know” (Richardson 2000 p. 934). By multiple ways of engagement new subtleties are reflected, or are refracted. This is used to overcome some of the critiques of triangulation as essentially limited. Maxwell suggests five types of validity some of which overlap with those explored by Freeman et al, (2007) these are theoretical validity, descriptive validity, evaluative validity, interpretive validity and generalizability (Maxwell, 1992; Thomson, 2011).

First and foremost in documenting the assumptions and driving forces behind the research would then be the articulation of the theories or explanations that the researcher uses. The importance of the role theory, especially social theory as well as concepts are key in informing and shaping research. Thus in this study the outlining of the metatheoretical assumptions of critical realism, with the social theories of morphogenesis, agency and the inner conversation allows me to indicate the particular lenses I adopted in the research. Danermark et al note that social theories can illuminate specific events and artefacts by analysing their constituents, relations and effects (Danermark et al., 2002). They maintain that “...in critical theory, theories have represented general (descriptive and normative) starting points for reflection and interpretation of current social problems...” (ibid p.124). As such theories posit particular knowledge of the underlying structures and mechanisms operating as tools to make connections, draw relationships and interpret phenomena.

Descriptive validity draws on the amount of detail about the processes engaged in, and in particular around how the data was handled. In particular how the data was collected, and in this instance transcribed, the kinds of decisions taken about what to include and exclude as that transcription process proceeds, and the choices about what is reported in the actual thesis allows a judgement about the veracity of the data upon which most of the analysis rests. Thus here I have outlined carefully the various aspects that shaped and affected the data collection management and analysis.

Interpretative validity focuses attention on the how the interpretations are made and on the justifications and evidence provided for such. Much is made of member checks/ peer reviews and debriefing to engage the issues and to ensure that justifications were reasoned. Colleagues and supervisors played a vital role in this respect in such a study as this. The evaluative aspect complements this in the sense that whilst interpretative may look at the grounding in the data researchers go further drawing on other aspects to provide justification for their claims. These can also be queried and engaged with.

6.9 Generalizability

Many of the issues of generalizability have already been outlined earlier, and the different approaches which are embodied by the empiricist notion of applying ideas from a large group to a more universal pattern which can be used to predict, and by the realist notion of extrapolating or exploring more transfactual aspects leading to an understanding (albeit a fallible understanding) of structures that inform events and activities. Thus retroduction (6.5.2) begins with the concrete and moves to abstraction, from surface manifestations to depth, from the empirical and actual to the real or structural. These concepts and patterns associated with this level can be more widely applied, but also take into consideration the fact that they operate within an open system, which is affected by context.

For critical realists then, generalizability has to do with developing explanations about the deep structures of reality, which involves the researcher engaging in abstraction and particularly, using retroductive thought operations as described earlier (3.5.1). In addition, critical realism brings an understanding that each case contains the whole story. It is the reader who must bring the generalizability to the reading of the narration and therefore bigger social structures can be informed by the case study findings ... (Quinn, 2006 p. 92)

6.10 Limitations

Having outlined the process in some detail and considered a wide variety of issues related to carrying out the project a number of limitations have already been considered. However, in any study there are always constraints that are faced in and during the execution. These may stem from the method adopted, to issues related to context and almost inevitably to the issue of time. In this instance there were a number of possible limitations. One that was foregrounded earlier is the interest of the researcher, since I am a concerned supervisor myself, still developing. The danger is of seeing and interpreting from my own position as semi-experienced (approx.. 20 supervisions), or the particular disciplinary experience from social science, or related to my own particular experiences. In all these instances I have sought to make my position clear, to continually reflect on my position vis-à-vis the participants in the research. Through constant questioning of my assumptions and issues one provides some kind of check.

Given the interest in this area which encompasses such a diversity of practice it is unlikely that any qualitative study could include the full variety of possibilities and so must necessarily be bounded by the particular experiences explored. This is addressed through the choice of critical realism which enables exploration of the particular, but with indications of how it relates to the broader aspects.

This acknowledges that coming to understand may be partial and even fallible. Thus despite the rich data – it could have been richer - it provides an insight into practices of supervision.

In the chapters which follow the eight interviews will be analysed individually, allowing the engagement with particular contexts to become apparent. The enablements and constraints will be explored, how individuals deal with these, and how their individual concerns emerge and shape the responses. A final chapter will draw these together, explore any similarities to provide the broader picture.

Chapter Seven: Taking on the supervisor role: learning, becoming and refining

Academic training based on being a scholar may be better preparation for future mentoring, yet academics are increasingly invited to focus on a having mode. They are not scholars, but 'employees' who have publications, an RAE score, high 'teaching scores' and consultancy work. If they have enough, they receive better job titles and performance-related pay.. the necessity [is] to have a certain percentage of staff with higher qualifications, contacts in industry and enterprise projects through competitive bidding. (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009)

Having provided the macro contexts, encompassing both the international and the national environments of the higher education systems, and mezzo context of the institution for this particular study within which postgraduate supervision occurs, and having explored briefly, at a general level, the micro aspects of being an academic in such situations and developing an academic identity, in these next chapters I turn to the specifics which the eight interviews conducted reveal. This is how individuals respond within their pre-existing contexts. Clegg (2008 p. 331) makes the point that "Questions of identity are, therefore, unlikely to be capable of being read in any simple way from macro-sociological analyses of the general context". The stories as told by Tabitha and Tim, and Theo (natural sciences), Paul and Paulina (social sciences), Julia and James (human and social sciences), Shandy (performing arts) and Priya (health sciences) provide a rich insight into how supervisors experience the supervisory process. These explore how their specific contexts constrain or enable their development, how practices have developed as situations have changed over time, and how it is possible or not to bring their personal emergent powers (PEPs) to shape their activities to develop their academic identities and further their particular concerns. It speaks to the "mode" that they particularly embrace in their daily lives and how this affects their practice. As much of the data as possible has been included to allow readers to judge for themselves, within as full a context as possible, the interpretations, but also to allow the respondents' interpretations to dominate. For this reason punctuation has been kept to a minimum in the data quotations and some of the repetitions, restarts and hesitations are also indicated. Each quotation is identified by a marker to indicate the respondent and sometimes the script, so James had two interviews and his quotations are designated J1 and J2 to indicate script and interview number. Others just have the initial and line numbers since there is only one script for that respondent. Data quotations are italicised to off-set

them from literature quotations. Anonymity is protected by the pseudonyms given and the changing of discipline and institutional names in square brackets.

In these chapters particular mechanisms and structures seemed to affect the way several of the individuals experienced supervision. How aspects play out through the various levels, those of the Real, the Actual and the Empirical, will be explored. Through the interviews the various responses of individuals to particular mechanisms identified by most respondents in their interviews and the discourses they choose from the range available are noted, as well as the ways that respondents draw on and use structural and cultural resources. This does not imply though, that those responses or engagements are necessarily the same in each instance. Mechanisms that operate at international, national and institutional levels are identified through the structures such as policies, processes, committees or organisations set up to promote particular activities and developments or through the cultural domain by distinguishing various discourses that are engaged. Thus in South Africa the NRF funding body is one structure, its policies would be others indicating the financial mechanisms that affect the sector. Institutional procedures, and development programmes such as mentoring, courses and policies, as well as disciplines or departments are also structures. Cultural aspects will be manifest through the dominant discourses that are identified such as the discourses of academic autonomy, economic exchange or accountability, or through accepted but not necessarily mandated practices.

Within institutions the influences and changes ensure that roles are ever evolving and emergent within contested spaces, and that this affects the identities of those who work within these institutions. The contested nature of academic identities has particularly been at the forefront of explorations of the changing academic workplace (Archer, 2008; Barnett, 2005; Clegg, 2008, 2013; Henkel, 2005, 2012; Trowler & Knight, 2000a). Given the emerging prominence of the postgraduate sector, the effects on, and changes in, the supervisory role are explored through individual experiences at an Empirical level. In this chapter how individuals develop as supervisors is foregrounded, through their own agency engaging various mechanisms either structural or cultural to further their development. Since literature emphasizes the importance of the interaction between supervisor and student, questions are raised about how these relationships develop, how far supervisors are free to decide upon their actions and activities, and how far these are constrained. Whilst there is much about the responses from students, there is much less about the structures and cultures within the institution and how these impact on individual intentions, and how far individual intentions may affect those structures and cultures. Thus the importance of exploring experiences of

supervisors is highlighted, the need to understand these specific interactions has been really under-represented in research. As Ashwin (2012 p. 8) notes: "...it is perhaps surprising that until recently the impact of social structures on teaching-learning processes in higher education has not been a central concern of research in this area ". Supervisors' understandings, intentions, feelings, interests and motivations, as well as their broader academic activities will impact the process in a variety of ways. Thus we begin by looking at how individuals feel as they take up the supervisory role.

7.1 Being "thrown in the deep end": Taking on the Supervisor's Role

Taking on a new role in complex situations, where the process is highly variable and multifaceted, is, at an Empirical level, exciting, stimulating, and a confirmation of a certain status achieved, whilst at the same time also provoking anxiety and uncertainty. Whilst initial training as a mechanism for any profession is generally a qualification or certification, as part of a structural process, and covers a range of professional practices, such preparation cannot possibly cover all contingencies and new roles and activities that may emerge over time within professional environments. For academics their initial training is generally a degree in their disciplinary area, and when they move to the postgraduate level there is a focus on both deepening disciplinary content and theoretical knowledge, as well as on training in research skills but seldom on teaching or administrative skills (Bok cited in Bethune, 2006; Quinn, 2006). Individuals through their professional practice meet and move towards consolidating and developing different aspects of their profession during their practice as they become more experienced and more familiar with their professional environment. The discourse at the level of the Real consistently portrays academic jobs as having three pillars, teaching, research and administration (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Oshagbemi, 2000), and this is frequently reiterated in policy documents. In practice the consolidation may be towards an emphasis on teaching or administration or developing their research either through opportunity or planning. There may or may not be structures such as courses of study to assist with these. Until recently in many professions it was expected that individuals would simply "grow" into new roles (which could be informal or formal) including those of leadership and management (Lichty, 1999), some of which might be gained through promotion, and thus, as new roles and responsibilities are taken on there might be greater or lesser support within the system. Each of these structures offers each individual different forms of opportunities or constraints. In this regard supervision is one of those implicit roles and is no exception. Paul articulates his experience clearly:

...I must also say that one experience that I may share with you is that the system seems to think that everyone can supervise and so you are thrown in the deep end (P.I. 55-57)

This metaphor highlights, at the level of the Empirical, the individual and often unsupported, nature of the process in an environment where there may be few structures such as policies that focus on particular roles. Activities in the postgraduate sector are part of the traditional processes and practices that emerged with postgraduate qualifications, and as such have tended to be cultural rather than structural mechanisms which pervade the system, with general similarities but differing according to discipline in particular details. Individuals are expected to take on supervision when the occasion arises (often at their own initiative) because they are discipline experts and/or they have done research. As independent academics they are expected to know how, the expectation is that because they have done a higher degree themselves that they are therefore capable of supervising (and teaching). This assumption no doubt, at an Empirical level, increases feelings of anxiety for individuals giving rise to metaphors like 'being thrown in the deep end', being left to 'sink or swim', or to 'find one's feet' along with discourses of abandonment. The supposition is not unusual in the higher education context but it may be unwarranted as Quinn (2006 p. 193) quoting others notes in relation to teaching, and Paul has noted here with application to the practice of supervision:

One of the curious features of academic life is the practice of appointing junior lecturers almost exclusively on their research credentials. It seems to be assumed that the possession of a doctorate ensures that a new academic with no previous experience as a teacher will be competent at lecturing, conducting tutorials, seminars and other activities associated with university teaching (Crittenden n.d.:16 in Lee and Green 1997:11).

This is the same kind of attitude described by Johnson, Lee and Green (2000 p. 138) in their exploration of supervision, where students "...were required to reveal themselves as 'always-already' having the capacities for which they were to be credentialed at the end of the PhD process. They were to find in themselves the capacity to be autonomous, and they were to demonstrate that they could work on their own without supervision...". In the work situation there are similar expectations as incumbents take on new roles and tasks thus similarly we might also extend the label to this kind of discourse about professional practice as 'always already'.

Such discourse complements the discourses of 'academic autonomy', 'freedom' and 'independence' which pervade academia (Archer, 2008; Henkel, 2007). Such discourses create a particular cultural milieu which has become familiar and consolidates ideas of academics being free to choose what and how they teach, as well as how and what they research (and supervise). It is also linked

however, to the idea of a rite of passage, that this is one of the gatekeeping tasks that one needs to overcome. Foote (2010 p. 10) has noted that this is part of a more traditional culture in which individuals are expected to perform “ If an individual cannot do well without help then – in the long run – that person probably does not have the talent or stamina needed to succeed in an academic career”. As in other professions the idea that all aspects related to the workplace have been prepared for through certain educational courses or ‘training’ is unrealistic. Not only would it be impossible to cover the entire range of tasks but it embodies a particularly reductionist view of the role of education whilst also promoting the idea of a rather undynamic workplace environment. As such this notion is doomed to fail especially in the current complex professional environments but is still used to challenge educators, and to raise doubts about systems as well as teachers thus enabling ever greater mechanisms of control and so-called ‘quality’ to be put in place. This discourse is countered by several of the respondents using a discourse of resistance, that of “one size does not fit all”. What is apparent is that there are many roles that will not be covered in any training especially for highly variable situations and therefore workplaces need to have systems of support in place. Given the changing nature of the workplace, increasing scrutiny alongside the problem of a shrinking workforce, and particularly the challenge of capacity within the supervision arena proper support is necessary to ensure retention of capable staff.

In such situations, as with supervision, and for the tasks that are required within them, there may initially be an environment of minimal structure in the shape of little formal or specific training or few guiding documents or policies. It depends upon individual initiative and foresight. Whilst in Higher Education this may be in the process of changing, with newly emergent policies and processes being developed, nevertheless this emergence is patchy and it is often still perceived that there is a lack of support. In these cases it is necessary for individuals to engage with the needed activities thoughtfully. Supervision at the level of the Real in terms of structure is broadly similar, one supervisor responsible for a student (even in team situations), whilst at the level of the Actual it is clear that the tasks are multidimensional and the contexts dynamic and as such each event differs.

The literature around the differences between novices and experts, and how the development from one state to the other can be better facilitated (Benner et al., 2008) explores the process of engagement and development in unstructured professional environments. The need for experience, for a developing familiarity and understanding of the multiple possibilities of the context, and for practice, is evident in many situations. Practitioners need to be able to read the cues in the changing and varied situations and be able to make informed choices, often quickly. This can be seen in

situations such as the first few classes a new teacher takes on their own, the first time a psychologist or psychiatrist meets a patient on their own, emergency workers, lawyers and other professionals in their first interactions with clients on their own, where this is the first few individual engagements within the messy swamp of “real” professional practice (Aldous et al., 2014; Benner, 1984; Eraut, 2007; Schön, 1983). Empirically there is always a degree of uncertainty since much depends on developing a level of understanding and greater acquaintance with such situations at the level of the Actual which are continually varied and in relation to the context, as the literature on the novice and expert shows us (Benner, 1983; Benner et al., 2008; Kirkley, 2006; Schubert, Denmark, Crandall, Grome, & Pappas, 2013). There is also the judgement of fellow (and more experienced) practitioners which adds stress. It takes both time and practice within context to develop the knowledge and skills necessary. Similarly, postgraduate supervision poses a variety of possibilities. Whilst such engagements are inevitably stressful they also open up possibilities for those willing and able to take decisions and to exercise their agency.

Issues of uncertainty are manifest in these early stages heightening individual anxieties and at the level of the Empirical are unmistakably evident. This was clearly apparent in the interviews with the supervisors in this research:

I think I was quite overwhelmed when I was asked to supervise this thesis... I must say I feel quite nervous about it that's probably because I am a total novice...(Ja I.20-25)

I think one of the most terrifying experiences was having the first student thesis examined because you are very uncertain about what is acceptable and what isn't ..(T&T I. 35 – 37)

you have this responsibility to make sure this student doesn't submit a thesis that's rubbish so I'm nervous that she might make a huge boo boo and I won't know it that scares the living daylights out of me (Ja 215-217)

Hmm yeah I think my teaching style and my supervision style are certainly different now from what they were, there has been I'm pleased to say quite a lot of development and learning on my side..(J II I. 11)

Yet where the space may be less specifically structured it is here that learning can occur, and which allows greater potential for personal emergent powers (PEPs) or agency to be exercised. Within these spaces, and where individuals act, especially when engaging structure or culture, there is a greater potential for learning because it pushes individuals to make choices, to consider the options, provides different resources and may make individuals reflect on the possible consequences, as well

as confronting individuals with the outcomes of their decisions. Archer, like Schön (1983) feels that reflection plays an important role in learning. As Archer indicates, such situations force individuals to engage reflectively in order to make decisions on the basis of available information and knowledge, but which may however be erroneous, or made on the basis of only partial information and be made in relation to individual concerns and interests (Archer, 2007a, 2012; Bhaskar, 1989). It is in these spaces that individuals can make choices which begin to indicate their own ultimate concerns as their academic identities emerge. The issue of fallibility is inherent in such situations and has the potential to encourage learning but also to create new situations of constraint and enablement. Indeed, one respondent, Paul, talks about the kinds of errors that happen particularly at the level of the Actual with the lack of training and support or without full understanding of the various dynamics. There may be possible mechanisms at the level of the Real that can be used as resources to learn and develop, as for example with the examination reports. Individuals can therefore either, miss the potential for improvement and continue unaware, take the opportunity to improve, or resist it:

...one expects that under those circumstances then you have within the first year or so you are making errors some of which you are not able to correct errors both in your supervision and errors in .. both in in your examining of other lecturers' students in terms of growing people in supervision I am thinking here ways of learning from mistakes that we make ways of preventing mistakes from occurring but you know it as much as I do... that academics are difficult...(P I 16-17 & I 69-72)

The structurally emergent power (SEP) of examinations in terms of assessment and surveillance is obvious here. They pinpoint the "errors" made not only by the student, but often by the supervisor as well. Fallibility in earlier choices is exposed. In this instance the role they have in providing feedback is drawn upon (Foucault, 1991). Individuals are often pushed toward reflexivity in an effort to decide their courses of action as Archer notes "Reflexivity emanates as a result of lack of social guidelines about what to do in certain or unusual, unexpected situations" (Archer, 2012 p.2). As individuals move into different roles they may not yet be part of any corporate collectivity which might give them some leverage and also lowers individual risks (Archer, 2003). The stress of such situations can be exacerbated by lack of support, or increased levels of pressure, and much depends on the context in which initial engagement happens. It maybe however, that agency is more likely to be exercised in a context which is supportive, encouraging of initiative and freedom rather than a more restrictive one which seeks to limit and standardise. The interviews revealed that there were a number of strategies and structures that the respondents claimed they drew on in these situations

of uncertainty. The next sections explore the choices individuals make in relation to their various practices.

7.1.1 Learning the Ropes: Supervising as I was Supervised

Since taking on the role is largely an individual affair it was interesting to know what individuals indicate they drew on as resources and how each respondent reflected on the way they took up this role and this was explored through the interviews. As we seek to enlarge supervisory capacity then, it is useful to consider how supervisors have developed their supervisory knowledge and approaches. Most of the respondents noted the lack of any formal support or assistance, which points to minimal structure, and thus talked of the strategies that assisted them to cope with this new role. Most indicated that they fell back on their student experiences of supervision. Several engaged the discourse of 'teaching how you were taught' which implies application or practice through imitation. Shandy was quite clear that from early on, her beginning reflected the way she was supervised:

I think that's the first thing when you come to supervision new you tend to work as how you have worked.. (S I 135)

Whilst there is some reference to the training courses available, they did not seem to feature large for any of these respondents and the others reiterated Shandy's stance:

I must say we ... for us it was just learning from being supervised ourselves so we didn't really have any formal training other than the training I had, the short course I had with your department last year, but in general there is no formal training we basically learn from being supervised and then enact that process in our own supervision... I must admit that I had an excellent supervisor for my thesis (Pr I.37-41).

Whilst the emphasis seems to be on the modelled process, there is an indication of the emergence of other practices such as courses to support the process which Priya alludes to here but does not expand on. Paulina like Paul, identifies lack of support as a systemic issue indicating how mechanisms impact at the micro level. The cultural and structural aspects align with one another in this respect, leaving the individuals at the Empirical level quite vulnerable:

...the system is problematic in many ways not just as supervisor but as an academic in general. So my experiences as a supervisor I'll be putting them within that whole experience. So my first experience as a supervisor was it's more like you have been appointed as a lecturer, you know what to do. So I had huge problems with my first experience that I really didn't know what to do. I could only do with my student what my old supervisor did with me and I think it's sometimes it is a little problematic because you only know one way of doing things which is how you experienced it. So I think a little bit more support ... a bit

more support that they could benefit from lately there's been workshops I think I recall attending one workshop on supervision and I think a little bit more than that could really be useful I mean particularly when you are new I guess when you have supervised for a while and then the only contribution you could get is to give advice and share your experiences with other people but when you are new you certainly need erm.. to learn how to do the job because it the mere fact that you have got the lectureship job doesn't necessarily mean you know everything . (Pa l. 170-185)

Even from one who came into the institution through a formal mentoring programme as Paulina did, her observation was that mentoring was limited and that generally people learnt on the job, as they proceeded.

Whilst experience then is obviously a resource for practitioners, the learning drawn from personal supervision as a source can be either positive or negative. Individuals may choose to mimic or intentionally to do the converse, for example Julia notes she draws on her own experience of being supervised although she reverses the activities. In Foucaultian terms, inherent in her comment about nervousness is the awareness of surveillance whilst also showing in the rest of the comment the movement towards reflection and self-regulation:

I must say I feel quite nervous about it that's probably because I am a total novice erm so where do I learn to supervise looking back at the way I was supervised I do everything the opposite way because I don't think that was a very good example (Ja l.24 – 26)

As with many others it is the experience of supervision as a student, at both the level of the Empirical and the Actual that new supervisors claim to draw on. These practices reinforce notions of the 'autonomous academic', left to their own devices, who should be able to work without interference. However, previous experience provides support but at the same time consolidates the current structures thus tending towards morphostasis. This then becomes an expectation within institutions both from the institutional side and from the academics themselves, as Tabitha notes about supervision and attempts to introduce training initiatives "*I don't believe someone should try and tell me how to do it*" (T & T l. 716-17). These discourses at the level of the Real create a particular environment in which support is not seen as necessary and the discourse of 'autonomy', 'independence' and 'academic freedom' dominate. This invests power strongly with traditional structures especially disciplinary and institutional ones.

However, as has been indicated in the literature this culture is being challenged by the newly emergent discourses associated with 'new public management' (Barnett, 2011). The older discourse

is in tension with that of the increasing emergence of discourses of 'surveillance' and 'accountability', and of 'performance management'. In this new environment alternative structures emerge such as training, which is not only seen as desirable and supportive but may become more coercive and mandatory (in part to cover the institution in more litigious times). These new technologies of surveillance and control indicate that power is shifting from the disciplinary base towards greater institutional and national control. There is clearly intervention, guiding towards 'accepted' or 'best' practice as if that practice may be singular, and thus towards conformity and compliance. This is reinforced through mechanisms of surveillance and assessment such as the CHE and the HEQC and their processes of audits, and studies, as well as through institutional policies relating to staff development and promotions. As Miles et al (Miles & Polovina-Vukovic, 2012) indicate training, especially where this is made obligatory, is highly contested, challenged by notions of academic autonomy (Luzekyj & Badger, 2010). These tensions between SEPs and the cultural environment are clearly evident in the interviews of the respondents who sometimes make their positioning clear as Tabitha does. In areas where there is little support individuals draw on their own experience, making conscious choices related to consolidating good or more successful practices or rejecting less successful practices. Thus in some ways previous supervision processes may exert their SEPs and act as an unofficial mentoring process although without any specific focus or guidance on developing these skills for students who later enter academia. This may change now with new national outcomes which indicate the need for supervision to include some preparation of individuals for supervision. What is clear then is that role incumbents work to enter their disciplinary spaces and generally to conform to normative practices through their reference to earlier practices. However, increasingly they will also be expected to conform to institutional and national norms as well.

Often, however, participants may still be students themselves. Priya draws on her own experience of supervision from a student's perspective, and being both a supervisor and being supervised herself she notes that this dual situation in itself is stressful. Remmick et al. (Remmik, Karm, Haamer, & Lepp, 2011) indicate that this can generate quite contradictory feelings. Yet it can also be a source of support. Priya looks at how her supervisors, two of them, deal with issues and she uses this as a comparison for her own practice.

..it is still an ongoing learning I see how my supervisors handled my problems and then I compare my supervision to their supervision (Pr I.121-122)

This consolidates practices, or occasionally modifies them, but in general the overall approaches and structures remain unchallenged. Whilst most reflect the usefulness of their own student experience, one or two seek further for support. Julia was clear how, in a situation of quite sparse support, she decides how she can draw on other resources, although the main resource is still her own experience of being supervised. She looks for materials such as texts and websites relating to supervision on the internet from which she can garner ideas. Isolation though, fuels insecurity and vulnerability, and this can be related to professional identity. At this level of the Empirical within the disciplinary space individual values and commitments may become apparent reflecting aspects of the academic identity. Julia engages the discourse of 'responsibility and obligation', clearly flagging one aspect of her identity, in relation to the student, to herself and her professional stance as well as linking to the discourse of the expert or the 'one who knows':

... you have this responsibility ...I am totally terrified I am terrified of the hugeness of the field and us finding our little way in here and I'm the one who's supposed to know where the pitfalls are. I'm not sure that I do er some pitfalls I do know about others I don't.. (Ja I.215-222)

In this discourse care for the process is foregrounded despite the fact that there is also a potential challenge or 'risk' to the reputation of 'expert'. The relationship still remains an hierarchical one in which the supervisor is the knower and the student in an acolyte position, even though it may be tempered. The discourse of care provides a further power dimension in the supervisor student relationship – that in which the supervisor is positioned as protector. This discourse is based on personal values rather than on mandated requirements (du Bois, 2004). Similarly, others engage related discourses of 'care and challenge'.

Shandy begins her tale outlining her supervision experience which is at the Masters level and as with others her point of reference is her own experience as a student. Like Priya, she is currently studying towards her own Doctorate. She notes that her experience has been of good supervision which enables new supervisors to move with some degree of confidence into this new role:

I'm still doing my PhD like you so I am not supervising any PhD students. I'm primarily you know at postgraduate level working with honours and then of course the Masters. I think, I mean the first thing I would say that when you start I know when I started I supervised like I was supervised and I think I was very fortunate to have very compassionate, very caring supervisors so that set a lovely foundation for me... so I think that's the first thing when you come to supervision new you tend to work as how you have worked.. (S I. 25-31)

Emergent here are her own values as an academic, her valuing of compassion and caring guides her choices, which puts her, like Julia and Pauline in the category of developmental academic. Unlike garnering a sense of ideal supervisor practice from texts, in these instances the sense is gathered from actual interactions and will tend to rest upon a more emotive response. From Shandy's perspective there do not seem to be many other processes in place to support new supervisors.

The most experienced supervisors had very similar reflections. Tabitha and Tim were part of a science discipline where Tabitha provided a clear picture of her experience as a supervisor:

I think my first supervision would have been in the late 70s so probably about 30 years ... I'll guess about 17 PhDs and 30 something MScs about 35 MScs. We do co-supervise quite a lot but we both put in a hellav a lot of effort (T&T I.21-22).

whilst Tim estimated

I have been going for about 30 years at the last count I had something like 19 PhD graduates and about 25 or 28 MScs (T&T I. 16-17).

Both academics noted the challenges that they had faced as novice supervisors in the early years, and also reflected how one role expands into others. Giving an Empirical view, Tim indicated areas of greatest uncertainty that he, as a new supervisor, faced, embodied in quite strong terminology (see page 137). The point of judgement by others (surveillance), that of having the first thesis examined creates enormous anxiety and was fuelled by uncertainty around level and acceptance. It is interesting how far the supervisor experience mirrors that of postgraduate students. Tim notes another emergent role (and one that tends to relate to supervision) is that of becoming postgraduate examiner for theses which may be equally challenging:

...you are very uncertain about what is acceptable and what isn't. Similarly one of the most frightening things I've done was the first thesis I ever examined (T&T I. 35-36).

In earlier times, such as when Tim and Tabitha were starting out, there were not many guidelines to assist. This is one area in which emergent mechanisms at the National level such as the National Qualifications Framework, and the subsequent development of level descriptors have provided some additional information which might be helpful for supervisors and examiners who can consult these in relation to some criteria (South Africa, 2006, 2012). Nevertheless, as anyone using criteria is aware, these may be ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. Previously, however, such criteria remained largely as tacit knowledge within disciplines and institutions and thus these structures have the potential to enable or constrain postgraduate processes. As Amundsen and

McAlpine (2009) note there is a lack of clarity over what exactly is expected in relation to the PhD and the standards for this. It indicates a more overt shift of control from discipline and institution to government through such processes, where issues academic are, to a large extent, now being externally driven.

The challenge for the supervisor is clear and stark even in memory as this recall shows. It also indicates how inter-twined roles may be – not only taking on supervision but also becoming an examiner at this level. In either case this reflects on the function that peer judgement has on the development of identity. It becomes one measure of professionalism as well as enabling or constraining membership of a particular academic community.

Reflecting on developing his supervisory skills James like others notes that he learnt primarily by doing, engagement at the level of the Actual is important. He had received no training but over time has developed his own sense of what constitutes a PhD or Masters, and their different levels, whilst recognising that his assessment might be open to challenge, and especially so between disciplines. He moves into a position of expert. This reflects the findings in the literature on experts and novices, and on professionals working in highly flexible situations (Anderson, 2013; Benner, 1984; Schubert et al., 2013). He feels that academics seldom receive training in these aspects and, like Tabitha, intimates that he doesn't think that one can be taught supervision skills because one needs to be highly reactive or adaptable to the contexts (the "no one size fits all" discourse). It would seem that he subscribes to a "born teacher" discourse although he does not quite rule out some form of training. These ideas exist in a tension in his discussion. Like Tim he also rejects the notion of "one size fits all", thereby embracing a more individualistic process for supervisors. Nevertheless he does note that if academics in his discipline were to be trained he, as senior academic, would be the one to do that – providing guidelines. In this instance he engages again with the discourse of 'expertise' and 'experience'. This may relate to his subjective position as a custodian or gatekeeper for the discipline as senior academic. It also firmly locates the responsibility for training within the discipline. This slightly contradictory stance in relation to training, in part came about because he had been a presenter in a workshop that a colleague and I had run for postgraduate students in his faculty. He has also been an invited speaker on the Masters module offered on postgraduate supervision and so had a growing awareness of the trend towards offering staff development in this area. He recognised that other academics found this useful. He however protects and asserts the disciplinary independence:

I really did enjoy going to that PhD workshop although I wasn't there the whole time I had some teaching and so I thought 'ah how interesting' partly because a lot of it I agreed with I think that's exactly right and other things I hadn't thought of so much at all and one of the things that I thought I would quite like I will run a little session in our school here on supervision styles and its relation to personality because I know my style is very much linked to my personality (J2 I.406-414)

In mapping the trajectory of his own development, on the other hand, he shows how his practice has emerged in response to reflecting on the experiences he has had. His description of his experiences shows a level of reflection about both his personal identity and academic engagement that is part of his decision making process. Throughout the interview he reflected on how his style and ideas about supervision have emerged over time, often noting his conversation with himself regarding different elements. The process and experience has honed his practices, and this has also been done in response to the different professional demands within his context as he noted earlier. This process is akin to Schön's 'reflection in practice' and 'reflection on practice' (Schön, 1983). Both Archer and Foucault emphasize the importance of reflection in developing greater autonomy. With growing expertise and knowledge, there is also a growing power network.

So it is clear that individuals call upon their powers (PEPs), identify opportunities and find learning possibilities within their own particular situations. They can engage different structural or cultural mechanisms depending on their positions within institutions, and within academic communities. Despite being quite insecure taking on the new role, they explore various possibilities to lessen this. With the implementation of courses on supervision as emergent mechanisms academic staff may find that they have less freedom but more support. Responses may depend on how such mechanisms are instantiated.

7.1.2 Learning Through Supervising

Whilst mimicry – or reproductive learning – may be a useful beginning, it is quite limited especially in such multifaceted situations. Clearly to be successful it is necessary to develop other processes and thus a number of respondents identified that being a supervisor, and supervising itself was an important learning process both for supervision but also in a wider academic sense. A 'learning by doing' model of learning was espoused, where the experiential is important. Engaging in supervision itself was seen as an enablement. Paul is very clear on this:

... the actual process of supervising students er when you do it again and again you begin to learn many things and students themselves, they come up ... across with many many ways through which one can ask oneself whether what one is

doing is the best. So we learn from the students themselves or although they may not know it we really learn from the student. (P I. 37-42)

At the level of the Empirical or the Actual, experience or the practical, provides a learning opportunity for those so inclined to embrace it as such. This is particularly likely where it relates to a deeply held concern. Reflection also comes to the fore when activities incur a cost – either monetary or otherwise. Paul reflects that supervision is a solitary experience, where the individual supervisor has to fall back on their own resources, and their earlier experiences in difficult circumstances. Thus the work environment pushes the individual to becoming more autonomous, having to make decisions about their activities in isolation.

Reflecting on early experiences new supervisors such as Tim and Tabitha find that these provided rich feedback on which to build. Tabitha reflected on her experiences with her first students, again noting how each student brings different elements to the experience and how these have shaped her practice:

...thinking back to my first couple of students one was quite satisfactory... and one was a nightmare and she was a nightmare because her write up was terrible and I gave it back full of you know suggestions got it back and by the time we got to the fourth iteration she had a husband who came and said you are driving my wife into a nervous breakdown and I said well whose MSc do you think this is? You know that was actually not a nice experience ... but what I learned from that was do not ever accept a student's first random thoughts particularly if they are handwritten on the back of used computer sheets which was how it was... . (T&T I. 39-46)

Through these events at the level of the Actual, new practices begin to emerge as the individual reflects and makes decisions to ensure improved application. Empirically, unpleasant experiences such as this provoke consideration and change. It seemed that in earlier times disciplinary (and perhaps institutional) cultural practices (CEPS) governed the way supervision happened – those which were largely accepted (and expected) but unmandated. Tabitha positions herself here as custodian of quality, as one of the gatekeepers for entry to the discipline. Exerting her personal powers (PEPs) as disciplinary representative she gains a strong legitimacy and the power that this entails. Acceptance of the practices are reflected through the discourse of ‘*which was how it was...’*. It is in these moments where unexpected situations occur, or in which individuals face challenges as in this instance, where reflection is most required. Such experiences move individuals beyond a ‘taken for granted’ process. Individuals may need to make determinations of how to proceed deciding, after some consideration to change certain practices. Thus working in a situation, undergoing the process and facing challenge, has led to an elaboration and change, the

morphogenetic cycle. Despite this, however, it appears that here there is a large degree of acceptance of the processes and that any actions would largely be in line with “the way it was”. This change contributed to consolidation rather than substantive change. Tabitha clearly locates herself within the disciplinary context, and as custodian of quality which is a gatekeeper role. Agentially, this allows for her to draw on power as a social agent from the disciplinary perspective to inform her practice. In this space disciplines and disciplinary academics have a large degree of control over the process and knowledge, acting as disseminators but also gatekeepers for that knowledge.

Over time Tabitha and Tim indicated that they developed ideas for their own practice and what they would or would not accept based on their experiences. Their insistence now that each student prepare a more focused and specified research plan or idea right at the beginning is reiterated again later in the tale as they reflected about the writing process and students’ writing ability, and on the importance of writing in the conceptualising of a study. Based on this experience, and others they gave as illustration, the beginnings of an emergent strategy as they exert their PEPs, which has been consolidated over time, can be seen unfolding through the narrative:

So we actually require them to do a motivation right at the beginning... like I was talking to a chap about just now, ‘now you go away and read, abstract what you’ve read into points and then write your own version of it and don’t bring it to me until you feel you can’t make it better’ and this is right from the beginning. It’s a new MSc... but certainly the motivation at the beginning I feel very strongly about – having learnt early on somebody was in honours and half way through their project said ‘you know I don’t know what this is all about’ I thought Oh God you know what’s the point of this project anyway (T&T I. 345-355).

This may be the beginning of a more formalised process where the process of preparing the motivation becomes not just a requirement for the supervisor but also a discipline or faculty requirement, remembering that these examples are reflections on some years ago. Students would be expected to submit a formal proposal which goes through a range of checking stages and/or committees thus becoming a structure within the system. As part of the T2 to T3 morphogenetic cycle the elaboration of activity for particular events at the level of the Actual, with repetition and extension, begins to consolidate and become a new mechanism. In a morphogenetic move this may at first be a cultural mechanism which individuals or disciplines practice as a matter of course. Later, practitioners may introduce these notions at requisite committees where if agreed they would become part of policy and thus a structural mechanism. In relation to presenting formal research proposals or concept notes this already happens in some other faculties or schools in this institution and is rapidly becoming an institutional requirement. Indeed, this mechanism may work from the

international level down since new mechanisms relating to research ethics (often linked now to publishing houses as well) and relating to funding for research, are requiring details for research projects, and for detailed data collection instruments. For these supervisors in consideration of a number of experiences, and tellingly the two examples given were at quite different points in the interview thus corroborating the response, they have devised this emergent strategy to improve their own practice and make their projects more successful as well as lessen the cost in terms of time and effort for themselves. Other interviewees had similar ideas. Thus we can see that structure and culture may be affected from individual situations as well as from the more macro structural bases and indeed may be synergist at both micro and meso (or institutional) level.

The trajectory of James' own development shows how his practice has emerged in response to the experiences he has had at the level of the Actual. His description of his experiences shows a level of reflection about both his personal identity and academic engagement that is part of his decision making process. Throughout the interview he reflected on how his style and ideas about supervision have emerged over time, often noting his conversation with himself regarding different elements. The process and experience has honed his practices, and this has also been done in response to the different professional demands within his context. Again drawing on events at the level of the Actual he indicates how a shift has occurred:

... the first phd student I supervised .. very nice person but could not construct a logical argument in English and therefore should have really been sent away... [although she] came with actually quite a good masters degree from another university... I'm one of my personality characteristics is that I tend to rescue people that's my natural tendency learn to deal with... so there was [Lindy⁷] sort of needing rescuing I basically took her convoluted English and converted it paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter into a respectable PhD.. I gave her a lot of advice saying this is what you've got to do next... I sort of justified that to myself at the time because she was an oversea student ... and I was running a [discipline] programme with absolutely no money and except that because she was a foreign student some money I think they paid higher fees and some of those fees found their way to our bank account so we were able to do useful things... I remember thinking to myself at the time .. she is not really a good student but on the other hand she does come with that benefit so mercenary benefit but I probably would have done the same thing for her anyway... [J2 l.11-32]

⁷ Pseudonyms have been used to protect anonymity square bracket indicate insert for this or to ensure coherence in the quotation

This illustrates responses to systemic aspects within higher education, with activities being influenced by the need to keep a project or department going by using any source of funding, in this case the decision to accept an international student because this brought funding into the programme since they tend to pay higher fees, and are often sponsored. At the level of the Real, the SEP of limiting funding to Education has effects at all other levels in the system. Then there are the personal responses of the supervisor to the individual student given the desire to help within the immediate situation. In his early endeavours he is more accommodating of student needs than later. So despite this rather 'mercenary' view and instrumental approach to taking on this particular student, he also indicated that such helping tactics were a reflection of his personality. His style is also to ensure the well-being of the student. This student could be seen as a means of enablement, through the money brought in, but also she came at a cost to the supervisor since he ended up having to do a great deal of work as he later recognised and has since decided against. In particular he maps his progress through a number of examples and in his discussion introduces the discourse of "supervisor as saviour" or in his terms "rescuing parent" (Poore & Walkington, 2010). This image is of the supervisor who rescues the student, saving them through the lengths s/he is prepared to go, and the time spent to help the student through. He displays a high level of introspection in his contemplation of his activities and his own self-improvement. He sees himself as someone whose instinct is to assist people but he critically considers this process in relation to this particular attribute of his character:

I actually did a personal growth course...I came out very strongly as a rescuing parent so that's my natural style and when I found out about it I thought er absolutely right because people would come in and say.. especially the overseas students 'James I've got this issue' and I would say 'ah right I know what to do stand back I'll do it' .. so I'd rush off and exhaust myself doing it on their behalf.. (J2 1.34 – 41)

It is likely that as a new supervisor this kind of response, to do things for the students, might be forthcoming since in the initial phases it is particularly important that the first students supervised are successful. These reflect on the reputation of the new supervisor. Thus extra effort on the part of the supervisor might well be needed. It also shows however, that as an academic he adopts a caring approach to teaching and his students as well as being involved in his research. As he comes to understand the personal or professional cost of such actions, particularly to his own interests, he reshapes his behaviour in a conversation with himself which he reports on:

When I went through that programme I said right that's going to stop one thing about me is when well I'll argue against myself in a moment I do at least learn things and I do tr... my behaviour does modify as a result and so I was probably rescuing people a lot less... (J2 1.42-44)

Through reflection and a growing understanding of broader issues, as well as how his interests and concerns have developed, his practice has begun to change. He shifts from deliberation to planning. Actions here see a bringing together of personal concerns, institutional requirements and the interests of the student. It is clear that in these examples he is quite powerful in decision making and retains an autonomy even in the early phases.

Whilst supervisory interactions may provide guidance about supervision and how to go about it, they also have wider developmental implications. Theo is another respondent who identified that the opportunity to supervise is itself an important enabler. He feels that supervision provides him with a good learning experience, creating opportunity for development in relation to his discipline, his research and his developing identity as a researcher:

...because of my other commitments I don't have as much time as I used to when I sort of studied full time to engage with the literature... so having good students does build me as a researcher in return because I get to know about things that I otherwise wouldn't get to know if I didn't have students (T I.82- 87)

The importance of this growth and renewal is clear in several of the stories in this study. Supervision is identified as an enabling mechanism contributing to regeneration in terms of both intellectual development and energy, and to the emergence of a professional identity. It points to the aspects of boundary crossings as the multiple roles that academics engage inform one another.

Greater experience, and a developing expertise moves individuals from a novice position to a more expert position in terms of supervision. This is an important aspect of capacity development which requires time and engagement. Such individuals may also have greater power and flexibility within the institution. A range of learning happens that contributes to the renewal and extension of discipline knowledge, theoretical knowledge and knowledge of the academic domain as well as a way to keep up-to-date. Paulina reiterates this indicating both growth and challenge:

Every time you supervise a student it is a new experience. Students come with different research problems they come with different theories and there's always an invitation for me or a test I guess in some ways, into my own background and knowledge as to how much do you know about this, a specific area, specific theory or methodology. So it sort of asks you to go back and read on that particular subject so that you learn in the process. (Pa I.133-137)

Individuals find they need to engage with different approaches to research, and to the different kinds of problems that can be explored. Paulina sums up this reciprocal learning process:

So you learn in the process with the student so it's not just about you telling them what to do how to approach certain methodologies or how to conduct an interview how to administer a questionnaire so it's also about you, both of you learning and I find in that experience where I am supervising the student I learn a lot helps me a lot towards my own professional development (Pa l. 143-147)

Growing into the supervisory role, the importance of drawing on both her own experience and that of her students is seen as the way to develop understanding and skills. The students that she supervises tend to be those working in a professional context, and so they bring that work experience to their learning. In this way the supervisor also gains knowledge about the workplace. This challenges the notion of expertise, and where this resides. This reciprocal exchange evens the power dynamic between the two and makes clear that knowledge may reside in different groups. Whilst ultimately the granting institution retains power, through the structure of supervision, examinations and conference of degrees (SEPs), and supervisors remain the gatekeepers for the discipline, it is clear that professional practitioners have access to knowledge of the field of work. Thus, each supervision Paulina engages in also extends her supervision repertoire and her professional practical knowledge, and she recognises how this contributes to her growth.

Whilst extending knowledge in the areas of supervision and research, supervising also affects disciplinary knowledge for the supervisor as much as for the student. It pushes them to read to keep up with the student, and students themselves become a rich resource, presenting new materials themselves in their engagement with their projects. This is useful, if on occasion daunting as Julia notes:

I am reading er material on supervision and on academic writing cause the more I know the more I will have to pass on er then of course there is the endless reading in the discipline itself (Ja l.38-40)

Since she is largely outside the disciplinary environment without others around her with whom she can talk, or even listen to, she notes how much additional effort and time this takes. However, it is a way in which she may maintain and extend her expertise and disciplinary knowledge. In the context of the need for keeping up with disciplinary knowledge, the ways in which academics find to extend this knowledge is important.

She speaks about the emotional aspects of becoming a supervisor, at the level of the Empirical, capturing not only the challenges but also the pleasures. As a new supervisor she enjoys the achievements of her student which is motivating, contributes to confidence, but she notes that more

experienced supervisors (and possibly those with large numbers of students) may perhaps become quite jaded in this respect:

I think its watching this process of where the student goes from the idea in her head of what she wants to do and now finding her way in the literature... it's this unfolding I love to see er ja that really excites me how she finds new theory and new research .. and motivating that ja it's probably because I'm a novice an old researcher would probably think `agh not another one' (Ja I.205-212)

Like several other respondents James reiterates the importance of the personal educational aspect of supervising. Even as an established supervisor he indicates how the process contributes to his learning and keeping updated – also the rejuvenation and energising aspects.

I will say I have learnt a huge amount I mean about [discipline] I'm really talking about content not so much about supervision I know vastly more about [discipline] than I ever knew as a result of supervising students and to an extent marking theses and dissertations. It has been a wonderful way of learning for me I suppose if I didn't have any of the supervision I could have read some books but it's been a quite a fascinating... (J2 I.453-459)

What he says here is very similar to the points earlier raised by Paulina. It is not just absorbing the content, reading about it, but also engaging in questioning, theorising and discussing issues that helps to extend and create knowledge.

7.1.3 Learning Through Supervising Out of the Field

As initiate supervisors, generally role incumbents are seen as relatively newly inducted into the discipline and their experience of research may be limited and in this, as massification has occurred, so traditional practices have changed. The accepted assertion is that supervisors are `experts in their field' and this discourse is pervasive (McCallin & Nayar, 2012; Mouton, 2001) and there is also a notion that they are `established and experienced' researchers, however the concept of expertise may be a rather slippery one, and may be more or less difficult depending on the discipline concerned (Fraser & Mathews, 1999). This discourse, at the level of the Real, points to some contradiction with the current moves in pushing newly qualified young academics as supervisors. They have yet to develop their research profile. It also limits the scope of supervision to the field of expertise which may act as a constraint in relation to capacity. In actual practice it was interesting to note that the notion of expertise and experience is perhaps much more flexible than the literature would lead one to believe. In several instances at the level of the Actual, supervisors move beyond their areas of expertise creating other spaces for learning. For those academics who have large and

project-based research programmes in which students work, there may be less opportunity or inclination to engage in supervision 'out of the field' unless it directly links to the project. In other areas where students choose their own research project it may be more likely that supervisors could be asked to extend themselves. It was notable that several respondents commented on supervising out of their field. This may have been a practice in earlier times when there were fewer restrictions, and fewer policies in place, as well as possibly fewer supervisors. Less structure once again created the potential for greater agency. Individuals had greater control of the knowledge and gatekeeping and thus on their own recognisance were able to decide when to step beyond their own areas. Whilst this may heighten the anxieties and uncertainty at the level of the Empirical, it also plays a generative role and was often left to individual choice. Since primary learning in this area takes place "on the job" this is another variant in this regard.

Tabitha and Tim reflect on that process in earlier times (for these respondents approximately 20 – 25 years ago) when choice of supervisor was generally left to disciplines and faculties to police and in this, practice generally followed cultural norms for that grouping ie: "that was the way it was", this practice however may well be changing, at least in policy. There were certainly instances where supervision across disciplines occurred:

and that was difficult because I was picking up something out of my field - but we also tended to supervise, both of us, out of our field... earlier because that was the way it was erm .. (T&T I. 51 -55).

It is clear that the reasons for supervising across areas of expertise happen for a variety of reasons, some of which are personal but in this instance also appeared to be an institutional or disciplinary need. The 'out of field' discourse challenges the more given discourse of 'discipline expert' which is used to define the 'suitable' supervisor. Through the interviews though, it became clear that the 'out of field' experience was not exceptional. What it enabled was the use of available supervision capacity, and where supervisors were responsible and prepared to do the requisite preparation it could be an enriching experience as it was for both these supervisors, whilst in the process expanding capacity. Individual choice played a large role in this process. Pragmatic aspects play a role in practice and it seems that in this example at the level of the Actual a structural policy (not offering postgraduate study in one discipline) enabled this particular cultural practice to develop and individual agency allowed cross boundary supervision:

a lot of people at the [xxx] school were interested in doing [postgrad degrees].. they were science graduates and in those days you couldn't do a degree... there was not such a thing as [M...] Sci so they had to come through the science faculty and they had to have a supervisor in the science faculty so I had at least one PhD

and MSc that way but that wasn't too bad for me because I had done my own MSc was at the [xxx] school but for Tim.. (T&T I.56 -60)

Tim himself acknowledged that being able to cross these boundaries, not only between disciplines but in this instance cross faculty, was 'fun' and that in the process he had learnt a lot. Thus such opportunities enabled growth and learning and it is clear that it was stimulating. The element of fun was an issue he returned to later and was obviously part of his espoused value system. The discourse of fun engaged the ideas of the quixotic nature of creativity which draws on serendipity, as well as regeneration. Whilst the notion of fun may seem flippant it is an important energiser, motivator and for the fostering of creative thought (Chakrabarti, 2011; Lyall, Bruce, Tait, & Meagher, 2011; Sternberg, 1999). It enables growth through learning and can lead to innovation in practice. In situations where there are fewer structural constraints, such may be possible. The cultural space with discourses of 'academic freedom' and 'autonomy' also would encourage the more creative processes. In such situations, where control of knowledge lies with the academics within their disciplinary domains, there is potential for inventiveness. Where this space becomes more constrained, measured and pressured such creativity may be diminished.

However, both Tim and Tabitha reflect on the changing institutional environment in this regard noting that in their view others are similarly focusing on their area of expertise:

Tab: *You had to do so much spade work because you are out of your field perhaps we put in more background work for those than well perhaps we had to because we were you know in deep water, muddy water*

Tim: *that sort of thing doesn't happen now*

Tab: *No it doesn't happen now*

Tim: *people are they're concentrating on their own field of expertise (T&T I. 62 – 66)*

There are strong links here to the discourses of 'academic as expert'. The texts on supervision seldom discuss supervision out of field, although latterly with the international discourses of 'interdisciplinarity', aspects of supervising interdisciplinary projects have begun to emerge and this may be relevant to those who 'supervise out of their field' as well. Interestingly though, with the policies which insistently lay down minimum numbers for supervisors many are finding that they are having to "find" students where they may and in this way are being forced to move beyond their disciplines. Thus mechanisms are influencing change in practice and culture.

The shift away from supervising 'out of field' was picked up later in the conversation but in a way which indicated that even were it not for the discipline or institutional regulation of this practice,

thus introducing structural constraints, each supervisor would have come to a similar position more agentially because of the growing personal and professional cost in relation to their own development, research activities and interests. As Tabitha and Timothy also acknowledged, this constraining feature is the personal cost of interdisciplinary or cross-supervision done on an individual basis, that to do this required quite a bit of additional work and effort for the supervisor. Greater focus on their own research projects and increasing work pressures exacerbate this cost causing individuals to prioritise their activities and narrow their focus. Tabitha clearly notes the increasing personal and professional cost related to working out of one's field in terms of time and effort leads her to make quite conscious choices in relation to her own research. Personal concerns are prioritised:

[it requires⁸] the knowledge and background, it doesn't pay, I will not now take a student absolutely out of my field I cannot give of my best I'd rather send them to someone else... they really have to be interested in what I am interested in to get the maximum benefit (T&T I.210-213).

Once again her commitment to her academic identity is clear "cannot give of my best" in this case as a supervisor, as a teacher or as a researcher. As Archer indicates in exploring the actions of individuals as they make decisions:

They do so by deliberating subjectively, under their own descriptions, about what courses of action to take in the face of constraints and enablements; about the value to them of defending or promoting vested interests; about their willingness to pay the opportunity costs entailed in aspiring to various goals; and about whether or not circumstances allow them to become more ambitious in their life-politics, or induce them to be more circumspect. (Archer, 2007b p. 41)

Paulina, becoming a supervisor some 20 years later, reflects a similar attitude to that of Tim who finds such 'out of field' activity stimulating. She is still a novice supervisor, yet her desire to learn through the process was evident, and so she also sometimes exerts her agency and makes the choice to supervise a topic outside of her field :

...sometimes a student comes interested in a completely different topic from what you are doing and much as I know that the basis of a supervisor accepting a student is always it should be something you're in your area of interest sometimes you get a student who really is interested in something you have never

⁸ Square brackets indicate author's insertion in order to ensure maintenance of coherence and flow or in order to preserve anonymity

done before and out of curiosity and also sometimes wanting to learn something different you you sort of take it on and so you learn in the process with the student... (Pa I 138-146)

These are some ways in which individuals may resist the normative aspects, such as that of needing to be an 'expert'. As a variant on these stories James' experience was of being in one discipline, his primary discipline in which he works and then whilst working in that discipline beginning to work in another quite different discipline which he describes as his passion. He works in both, supervising students in both. It seemed from the way he talked of these two disciplines that they remain reasonably separate for him. His double capacity is interestingly different from the others and provides him with a particular power base from which to work.

The shift toward interdisciplinarity also reflects on the notion of expertise and experience, where supervisors are expected to cross discipline boundaries. Paul addresses the issue of cross boundary supervision in particular, as one way to deal with interdisciplinarity:

...multidisciplinary... I think it's something we need to learn I am supervising one student who is studying [xxxx] they are interested in the culture that has emerged out of this merging process so yes they are talking [xxx] and leadership which I can handle. They are talking [xxx] which I think there are some other people who have a better understanding than myself. So we are seemingly seeing more and more of those kinds of studies and therefore I think we need to we need to improve our capacity in that regard.... (P I 136 – 150)

Engaging in the discourse of capacity and capacity building he indicates that the way to extend capacity is through training – so that co-supervision can provide learning. The issue of the role of discipline expertise seems completely overlooked at this point. He draws on the skills discourse and in some senses counters the 'born' teacher discourse with that of 'teacher as technician' where these kinds of interactions can be taught and replicated. However, he does indicate that there are difficulties with interdisciplinary and co-supervision issues that Lyall and Meagher (2012) and Lau and Pasquini (2008) note in relation to interdisciplinarity and the tensions and anxieties that emerge. Supervisors need to have some say in their engagement in such ventures and be able to refuse where they feel uncomfortable. It would seem, however, that a number of these respondents chose to engage with some areas they were less 'expert' in for the purpose of learning and enhancing their knowledge but then were prepared to do the additional work in order to do 'a good job'. It was a point of growth and stimulation for them. These points of learning as they occur informally are important in a growing understanding of how individuals not only develop their skills but also regenerate, re-energise, renew and extend their knowledge base. However, it may also lead to

instances where there are gaps or weaknesses in the knowledge of the supervisors and which may be more difficult to deal with than working within a disciplinary culture. Research into how supervisors cope with these could reveal useful information but this is not the focus of this study.

7.1.4 Learning from Others

Whilst in a more traditional university or institutional context where discourses of 'autonomy' and 'academic freedom' dominate it is easy to see why at the level of the Empirical supervisors may feel isolated, lonely and rather uncertain. Interaction with others on this issue may not always be easy unless one is part of a team, yet some of the respondents did indicate that they were able to draw on others in the learning process.

One possible enabling mechanism that might be used to facilitate the process for new supervisors is that of mentoring. How far mediation and mentoring can facilitate the entrance into such activities, however, may depend on a host of things such as the size of the institution, the staff complement, the underlying philosophy toward staff and training opportunities such as those structures discussed elsewhere, along with others. Most particularly it rests upon the willingness and skills of those who become mentors and on how the mentees take up their opportunities. The process may be formal or informal. In the opening chapter I indicated my own actions in seeking mentorship informally and how that did not work, and within the study for the respondents some indicated that they would have appreciated mentoring as Paul did.

Becoming a supervisor...er well my experience has been that I would have wanted to be mentored er when I came to this university knowing the university ... as a big institution I had hoped that I was going to now have an opportunity to work under professors and begin to learn things slowly and become mature under the guidance of other people but what I found was that I was supposed to hit the ground running as it were because there was work waiting for me.... (P 1. 5-8)

The discourse of 'hit the ground running' or 'being thrown in the deep end', where those entering the workplace are expected to be already fully prepared is consistent with the notion that a qualification represents capacity and ability, and in part the notion that after initial education workers, in this case academics, are ready (for any eventuality), prepared for the workplace – their abilities are inherent ('always already' able or ready). Mentoring however embraces a notion of "learning as apprenticeship" in an ongoing process, as well as "learning as socially constructed", and "learning in context". It links to the traditional academic discourse of "collegiality" and of professional conversations (Grimshaw, 1989; Tight, 2014) with ideas of learning from interactions between colleagues rather than in Tabitha's terms "being told". Manathunga (2007b) however,

challenges this commonly posited idea of mentoring noting that far from being a more democratic and equal relationship, it hides power dynamics that may go unexplored. This can be seen in the setting up of the relationship where 'junior' staff are paired with "senior" or "more experienced" staff. The process is one which is designed to ensure that individuals become familiar with the norms and practices of both the institution and the discipline. Already the notions of hierarchy are embedded in the language and positions, and with clear suggestions of surveillance and assessment. Manathunga styles this peer regulation (Manathunga, 2012). Power may however reside at either disciplinary or institutional level.

In some institutions such mechanisms have emerged through a variety of different structures. For two of the respondents Theo and Paulina, they were part of such a formal structure, an international and inter-institutional programme which was designed to mentor young academics from under-represented social groups as part of an institutional transformation project, and an initiative operative in several institutions in South Africa supported by donor funding. There is a tension here around what is transformed, and what transformation means. This mentoring process is one designed to fast track individuals into the institution, in many ways a process of assimilation.

Whilst this mechanism was not set up specifically to support supervision development the fact that each participant had a senior academic as a mentor in order to induct them into the variety of academic practices including supervision had the potential to be enabling. In many instances at the level of the Actual, recipients of the programme worked with their mentor to supervise at different levels as Theo indicates he has been doing. This mirrors the kinds of strategies that Kotecha (2012) outlined for the SADC countries. Thus we can see that at the level of the Real mechanisms may be responsible for emergent projects and practices in individual institutions, and in different departments. External forces begin to exert their powers in terms of what happens institutionally. In some instances (though not all), this mechanism was an enabling process as it was for Theo, and reflects the kind of interaction that someone like Paul (who was not part of the programme) had hoped for during his initiation but did not receive:

Yes there are experiences ...because I have been employed here for about 8 years and almost immediately I started co-supervising students with people like my mentor ...about a year and half ago I started co-supervising the PhD with [senior professor] ... erm look I still get a lot of assistance from more seasoned researchers I've got quite a number of people in my department who are still mentoring me when I get hiccups I go crying on their shoulders ja so that is of great assistance to me... (T 118 – 20 & 61-64)

As indicated here a structure at the level of the Real instituted for one purpose by the institution has been embraced within the department and agentially extended for a range of academic activities, many of the departmental staff (over and above those formally designated as mentor through the programme) have provided ongoing mentorship and this is an enabling and developmental environment for the new staff member. Theo engages his PEPs to utilise this process to the full and support his development as a researcher and supervisor and establish himself within the discipline. Thus, unlike some of the others, the resources Theo has in making choices in relation to supervision strategies are not just his own experience as a student, or his own reflection but also colleagues within the department and in industry where he has strong connections because of the departmental research. The team nature of the projects in science facilitates the networking possibilities. This would allow him to test out ideas with colleagues in moments of uncertainty as he indicates. He notes the role that talking to others plays in his development and he exercises agency in consciously utilising colleagues and mentors valuing this process. Whilst he makes good use of the opportunities to bounce things off his colleagues "*crying on their shoulders*" as he puts it, and clearly makes best use of the mentoring possibilities it seems that he is also keen to move beyond and make independent decisions. This process, whilst helpful for new staff, also ensures that new members are assimilated, and become part of the existing structures. They are helped to fit in, develop the necessary values and work ethos. They play a normalising role which tends to ensure a coherence within the status quo.

In other instances within the institution the process did not work as strongly. The other respondent who came through the same programme but in a different discipline, made hardly any reference to this process whatsoever. As Archer (2003, p. 5) maintains, such mechanisms remain dormant or only potential, unless activated by someone in relation to their project as either an enablement or hindrance (Delamont et al., 2004; Lahenius & Ikävalko, 2012; Paul, Olson, & Gul, 2014; Pole, 1998; Wisker, 2005). Both mentors and mentees play a role in the success of the process, and either can be proactive or might not wish to take it further. In the current higher education environment it may be that individuals will be resistant or reluctant to take on these roles which may not be in their career interests in terms of how productivity is measured. Theo on the other hand, agentially makes conscious use of the process thereby not only consolidating the potential but extending it.

The usefulness of similar processes has been highlighted in the literature which endorses the development of cohort models, or guardian supervisors (de Lange et al., 2011; Wisker et al., 2007) which can operate in a similar fashion. Such processes can operate in the sense of both mentoring

and co-supervision. Perhaps the closest formal process to mentoring and directly related to supervision that is being used for this purpose, would be that of co-supervision which has become a strongly emergent structure being embraced for support and training purposes by institutions.

Whilst Theo and Paulina have institutional structures that have helped them draw on others for support, others may need to make their own connections more informally. Tabitha and Tim provide an example of individuals who, drawing on their environment, agentially shape their own spaces. As these academics began to consolidate their interests and concerns, and especially in relation to their careers, their story reflects that research emerged strongly as their central project. Their co-operative effort and collaboration clearly began early in their careers, having known one another during their student years, and was one way of coping with their particular academic demands and their own specific evolving academic agendas. As indicated earlier, young academics may often be isolated in their initial phases, with or without a Doctorate indicating entry into the “community of practice”. They have not yet become an active member with status to effect change. They have a limited access to resources which would ensure any powerful stance. In this instance for these academics their own needs and focus have led them to develop a synergistic approach in their academic context which ensures that they can foreground and develop their key concern, that of their research, yet, in the postgraduate context, in a way which benefits both the students and themselves as academics. They supported each other creating their own personal supportive structure. This strong team approach has been highly effective for them and created a power dynamic for them which others may not have had.

In the earlier years the absence of specific structures and with cultural practices regulating many aspects of supervision, there was opportunity for such agency by individual supervisors, and which could be guided by individual interests and concerns. As colleagues they could access funding for joint projects building a strong partnership. Archer indicates “... in the relative absence of authoritative sources of normativity, young people are increasingly thrown back upon reflexivity assessing how to realize their personal concerns in order to make their way through the world”(Archer, 2012 p. 96-97). It would appear that in this case the opportunity enabled Tabitha and Timothy to devise a plan for a particular form of co-supervision and academic collaboration, whether formally recognised or not, which allowed them to fulfil their roles as supervisors, to contribute to their developing academic identity but also to begin to prioritise their own research activities. It would seem that by dovetailing their activities and academic roles, they found that this allowed them to deepen and establish a commitment to pursue their own research concerns whilst

still supporting their students. In this fashion they have over the years worked out how to maintain and consolidate what Archer (2012) refers to as their `relational goods`. Tabitha clearly articulates this when she outlines the way they developed co-supervision, or perhaps more likely a team supervision process in order to allow for other activities. In this case such an alliance allows for these two to work as interlocutors for each other, and to be the point of contact in mapping ways forward. This fits Archer's description of "communicative reflexivity". She maintains:

Since `thought and talk' with `similar and familiars' is the relational process making for communicative reflexivity – which, in turn, reinforces social solidarity – this is the first part of its linkage with morphostasis via `contextual continuity' (Archer, 2012 p. 21).

Thus collaboration and joint projects may appeal and work in favour of such individuals. This can be most fruitful where the relationship and process is jointly decided and both parties engage agentially and both benefit, as with Tabitha and Tim. In this instance it was an informal and personal development rather than one that was mandated through institutional or disciplinary practice, although their disciplinary context and the cultural domain may have been conducive. Their agency in implementing this strategy enables their other activities, allowing them to develop and prioritise their research activities, as well as benefiting the students. Such a collaboration has lasted through their academic careers assisting them to forward their particular concerns and interests – that of their research:

When I started off as a supervisor I started as sole supervisor and something that occurred to me over the years was that it was actually much fairer to me and to the student to have a team because the student gets more than one view point and also it helps a hellav a lot when I'm busy and Tim takes over and vice versa ... and we tend to do it that way well I tend to do it that way now (T&T I26-30)

Although throughout the interview, Tabitha clearly indicates her primary concern with research she also highlights her commitment to the students, engaging the discourse of the `caring teacher' to evidence consideration of fairness to the student. This is balanced however by the notion of being fair to self in the pursuit of one's own concern – their developing research activities. It also links to a more constructivist view of learning where students gain from `...more than one view point'. For both academics it diminishes the cost (in all senses of the term), and thus supports the progress towards their ultimate concerns.

7.1.5 Staff Development Initiatives

Whilst mentoring often occurs as an informal arrangement between individuals, as indicated there has been a move to formalise the process, and these kinds of processes are seen as possible staff development initiatives. Mentoring programmes have evolved in a range of business contexts, where the mentors, those to be mentored and the process itself is highly structured becoming part of institutional or broader initiatives at the level of the Real. One example referred to above has been given in the higher education context. Such formal programmes establish control within institutional structures, undercutting to a large extent more equitable arrangements. Thus it can become one form of surveillance and monitoring. However, much may depend on how the individuals involved take up the project and with what level of understanding and commitment.

A similar mechanism, but one which is more formal, and that several respondents alluded to as generally supportive, was co-supervision. The specific role of co-supervision as a supportive structure in supervision for the respondents is reflected through the interviews. Co-supervision is used in a range of different ways in the postgraduate sector. In some instances it allows for expertise either in content, discipline or in methodology to be drawn upon from different sources. It may be used where supervisors come from different institutions, or different work contexts, as well as different disciplinary areas, or cross faculty. In such instances, not only does it allow access to varied expertise, but is a mechanism for both control and surveillance anchoring the supervision within a particular context. This is particularly useful for emergent practices such as those encouraging interdisciplinary studies. Paul refers to this and indicates some of the issues that can arise for those supervising.

...then this is a challenge because we are supposed to be moving into interdisciplinary multidisciplinary kind of setups so I think we have to develop more and more skills and expertise in co supervision because where students are coming with cross disciplinary types of topics er I find myself not adequately equipped to link up with somebody in another discipline and do a good job with the student. I think its something we need to learn and in my experience I am seeing very little of that kind of er in that kind of work in this faculty (P I.136-141).

Theo, from a science perspective, where many projects are conducted in collaboration with industry, is more favourably disposed to engaging with others in this capacity. This maybe because he is more open to such partnerships, which may not always be academic in the way perhaps Paul is referring to but sometimes links to industry.

However, as Julia and Theo note the appointment of a co-supervisor for them was a formal means to ensure that support was available for the new supervisor, or the supervisor in an unfamiliar area, and may well have overlapped with the mentoring. Co-supervision as a structure, used in this way, is generally based on an implicit notion of modelling, whilst individuals may get the opportunity to offer guidance and advice, the main-supervisor can correct, but generally demonstrates strategies through their activities. Here the aspect of surveillance, assessment and feedback (Foucault, 1991; Rau, 2004) is quite clear in the structuring of the process. Hierarchies are clear and positions of power are inscribed. The way the process occurs however is highly variant. In many instances one or other of the supervisors does not fulfil their responsibilities. This may be especially problematic where it is the less experienced partner who does most of the work but gets little recognition within the system. Several writers note the issues related to co-supervision (Paul et al., 2014; Peelo, nd). The one respondent, Paul, outlines his experience of the process:

I have had some experience of co-supervision – and what I am finding is that it is not very easy. In as much as one learns from another it looks like there are difficulties. (P 134-5)

Others however were more positive. This mechanism allows for a variety of uses. In Julia's situation she was not only learning the process, but was becoming familiar with, and being introduced to, the policies, practices and administration that accompanies the process within a specific faculty and department and with which she felt unfamiliar because of her peripheral positioning. Her subjective position may be characterised as junior, outsider and neophyte. The process is a mechanism for induction and membership. The co-supervisor took the senior position, inductor and embraced the role of liaison with the disciplinary group. The process ended when the co-supervisor left both the institution and the country through emigration, although communication was still possible at a distance. It seems no further arrangements were made by either the supervisor or the department. Theo and Julia, who experienced some form of mentorship, however, emphasize the usefulness, and Julia highlights the potential opportunities of working closely with a more experienced individual:

...having a co-supervisor was helpful in the sense that she started the process off with a discussion with the student and so on but the submission of the proposal happened after she had left so I was landed with that and I had no clue and I don't think that's a good idea so I would have preferred to be co supervisor for the duration (Ja 1 82-85)

Similarly, co-supervision, a structural process in one institution where he worked before his appointment in the institution that is the context for this study, enabled James to reflect on the process and build on strategies that his partner used. Thus morphogenetically, practices change and

evolve. As he worked with his colleague an emergent strategy began to develop which he has subsequently used regularly with his students. This strategy has become a foundational practice in his supervision. This is particularly important in his case given that his students do a lot of fieldwork in countries distant from his base:

In my previous university we very largely had joint supervisors so two staff members and ...so a lot of my students both past and present erm engage in field work in their home countries and er the real temptation is to go off to do field work before you are really ready erm because the urge er is 'I want to get back home'... 'I just want to go and collect the data'... I was supervising a student who was actually Indonesian who was working on the [XXX] industry .. and my joint.. the other supervisor there was extremely helpful in saying 'we must be totally clear what you the student are going to collect before we are going to let you go off and collect data' because the temptation would have been to rush off and use what I call the vacuum cleaner approach suck up everything you can find in a big bag and bring it back ...so he was very careful saying what the particular individual bits of data that the student would need to answer the research questions that the student had set themselves and so the student was held back quite some months from going home but on the other hand when he did go home and er collected this data it was extremely to the point ...so that was actually quite important to me 'don't let students go off to the field until they are ready'... (J1 | 167 -189)

In this instance the experience at the level of the Actual of the other supervisor provides a point of learning for this supervisor as well as the student, and has contributed to his supervision repertoire. In several disciplines it may still be possible to get by with a rather generalised concept note as a proposal – dependent of the level of the qualification, whilst in others a much more stringent process is required before a student's project is accepted. The level of detail in relation to aspects such as research design may vary significantly. In his reflection by reviewing the process and then planning, James has an emergent strategy which becomes a key practice for him. Co-supervision thus, can be an enabling mechanism. Nevertheless, it is highly dependent upon individual agency to be effective.

In both of the examples of mentoring and/or co –supervision as enabling mechanisms issues of the quality of the effects of the mechanism are raised, as they are instantiated (or not) variably by individuals. In some instances neither mentoring nor co-supervision are helpful, or it may be that they do not offer anything new to the participants and there are a number of issues which may emerge during the process (Lahenius & Ikävalko, 2012; Peelo, nd; Pole, 1998). This may be because of the way they are implemented; role incumbents may fulfil these roles in very different ways or indeed be unaware that they are being expected to take on these roles. The power in these

situations is generally invested in the senior or experienced staff member. Similarly, if the process does not seem to serve the concerns and interests of the recipient they equally may choose not to engage in the process. The process is one of normalisation and serves to align actions and measures to those of discipline and institution.

However, in the face of growing critique, reports and general concern about the quality of graduates and higher education, there have been growing moves over the last 10 – 15 years to implement mechanisms such as more formal training courses, mentoring programmes, and other staff development initiatives relating to supervision that are more firmly under the control of institutions and national processes (ASSAF, 2010). Whilst these have the potential to be useful and supportive there are those who see a more cautionary side to such programmes. If institutions are seen to provide such, then should individuals not engage in their roles suitably, or supervise poorly, receive poor ratings from either students or the institution then they can be held personally responsible for their short-comings and held accountable (Baatjes, 2005; Gray, 2009; Shamir, 2008). Whilst there are certainly elements of this in institutions in which the discourses of 'performance management', 'personal development' and 'risk management' predominate most try to disguise this by covering with discourses of 'development', and 'quality'. To be fair though, these technologies of management are still emergent, and in some areas engaged in more aggressively than in others. Institutions may decide to take a more punitive approach, or they may be genuinely trying to support their staff. In examining the mechanisms of support for supervisors it is also useful to explore how they emerge and how they develop further, or how the process changes from support to something more imposed.

Thus formal "training" courses have begun to emerge, often couched in a "training" and a "skills" discourse, which is an anathema in a higher education context but which is becoming ever more prevalent along with a vocational focus. Technologies of power through mechanisms at the national level contribute to this. In the South African context where 1% of organisational salary budgets are taken as a tax by government, and can only be partially claimed back on evidence of training for employees, these courses are often seen as vital in this process (South Africa, 2007). Thus it is used as a driver to achieve desired outcomes. So such courses clearly can be used to claim some recompense from the Skills Levy Tax.

Such courses and workshops mirror international trends, and which then become the structures that individuals encounter possibly alongside other structures such as professional development policies

(Quinn, 2012). As such, at the level of the Real, these can act either as constraints or enablers, and may encourage engagement or resistance. The difficulty is, however, that the contexts supervisors find themselves in, at the level of the Actual in the supervision process, are highly variable, and they encompass a range of different activities, individuals and processes and these can be difficult to capture in a generic course or workshop. Such interventions need to be carefully and sensitively designed and implemented in order to be supportive and useful. The question that is raised is whether these are attempts to promote conformity and compliance (indoctrination), or provides space for dialogue and creativity. Participants in their individual responses may find these courses useful but still feel confronted by unanticipated difficulties in their actual practice which increase the lack of confidence in the early stages. This is particularly apposite where student diversity is increasing, as well as a proliferation of varying processes themselves to which supervisors need to respond.

More traditionally as a role taken on perhaps a bit later in a career there has possibly been an expectation that the ability to supervise would emerge and improve as individuals become more familiar with the academic environment and begin to develop their own research. As such, the dearth of any explicit guidance or training may be unsurprising. This may however be more problematic the earlier individuals have to engage and the more heterogeneous the student body becomes. In many instances the details of the role are not made explicit. Paul, in particular, notes that it is expected that you know the job that you are stepping into:

...of course the institution is saying that you are employed in your office because you know what you are doing as an academic and therefore you are not expected to be starting from zero but one would want to see more by way of erm purposeful in terms of growing people .. (sic) (P I. 68-70)

Here Paul indicates that such expectations may be a consequence of more traditional ideas of academic freedom and autonomy in the cultural domain “*because you know what you are doing as an academic*”, an idea that may work in a homogenous and hierarchical environment but less so in one which is much more diverse. Thus those still wishing to embrace the more traditional notions of academia may be more intent on espousing that autonomy and freedom. Tim highlights the variety and complexity in reflecting, at the level of the Actual, on the professional development courses he is familiar with and contributes to as a senior academic highlighting the difficulty in relation to such training:

I've spoken at these tertiary education groupings before and the one thing I always start with is `supervisors and students come in all shapes and sizes and

levels of commitment and intellectual ability and I find there is no recipe... (T&T I.77-78).

In order to highlight the variability he engages the discourse of 'no recipe' and 'no one size fits all' and in doing so engages with ideas of autonomy and freedom, claiming, perhaps indirectly, the role of responsiveness and autonomy for the supervisor. As such by espousing this position he embodies a resistance to ongoing regulation and standardisation which is embodied in the "one size fits all" pressures towards uniformity which is increasingly at odds with the growing complexity of the practice. Along with other comments he made during the discussion such as, "...*there's more pressure to be organised and to walk down the well trodden path there is less room for 'oh that's fun..' just that sort of intellectual freedom*" (T&T I.245-247) he raises issues around the convergence of supervision practices which he seems to feel contributes towards a uniformity and stifling of creativity. His is also a discourse which, drawing on the domain of the Real, privileges the notion of the autonomous academic. The trend towards standardisation and conformity may be counterproductive for a situation where variation and adaptability are necessary and is in contrast to the discourses of fluidity and complexity linked to the 'no recipe' or 'no one size fits all' discourse. Whilst courses may vary depending on the approach taken, and many developers try to consider variability, there is a sense here that these courses may promote a rather formulaic engagement and may work to ensure a normativity stance. This relates to Bhaskar's critique of positivistic approaches and understandings of social interactions, the regularities which work so well within closed systems (even if created artificially) do not work well in the open systems which are society (Bhaskar, 1989; Lawson, 1997). Ironically the views about the autonomy of the individual supervisor and the supervisory process may be a consequence of a certain understanding of postgraduate study which is being eroded by new developments and structures in society and education more broadly.

Archer (2012) would suggest that such increasing variability is part of the move towards a morphogenetic society. However, the question maybe, that in situations where one is dealing with a range of individuals in any era perhaps uncertainty at the level of the empirical will always be a key factor. What Archer may not however, have explored is that within many institutional cultures in the less certain world, the response has been an increasing bureaucracy and development of restrictive structures that individuals encounter at the level of the Real, in their work and professional practice (Henkel, 2005, 2012). Many of the processes work towards a greater standardisation and restrictions on variation. These two, whilst seemingly in contradistinction, may however, be related, with one engendering the other. This is particularly apparent through the

emergence in higher education of performance management, greater regulation and the casualization of labour in the domain of the Real. In this there is a shift of power away from individuals and disciplines to the institution, and at a more macro level governments. In such an increasing climate of instability and accountability with its technologies of performance, and excellence brought in to contain it, anxiety may also be heightened. This combined structural and cultural emergence directly affects practitioners as they go about their professional duties.

The choice of strategy, and how individuals proceed, is directly influenced by the people involved in the interaction (ie: the student and the supervisor) as well as the context within which they operate. For Tim it is necessary to be adaptable and to respond to the varied situations that supervisors find themselves in and to the kinds of students presenting themselves. It is this variability that makes him question professional development courses which may suggest a 'one size fits all' picture. Tabitha's response to the trend towards professional development in this area is similar, seeing such moves as somewhat suspect, and she is quite resistant to the notion, extending the discussion to the trend toward training for teaching and learning as well:

You know... I wonder if it isn't you either can or you can't or you know it's like teaching you can improve someone whose got skills in teaching but I don't believe that all these HDEs are going to make a good teacher out of someone who isn't a good teacher and I think this supervision thing too it's the kind of thing that grows with you certainly with us that's the way it's been... Supervision is very personal I don't want someone to tell me how to do what is the real essence of my job I have supervised successfully more PhDs and MScs than anyone in this university and I haven't read a single paper on how I should supervise and I don't I don't believe that someone should try and tell me how to do it All these teaching and learnings and innovative teachings and I know that the students enjoy my teaching and I am not in the least bit innovative in terms of the modern things and I still use overheads it's the way I do it my enthusiasm... (T&T I 706 -720).

Tabitha engages the discourse of the "born teacher" in her discussion related to learning about teaching, or developing supervision skills. At the level of the Actual and the Empirical she indicates here that she has found or developed a teaching approach that seems to work for her. Her rejection of being "told" about teaching, or to the notion of "innovative" teaching, allows her to hold onto her current approach and maintain the status quo. Thus the 'born teacher' discourse here is protectionist, and clearly relates to the notion of the autonomous academic. Her reflection of such courses is that they are designed to "tell" (a term she uses at least twice) embedding them in a didactical instructional discourse, one seen as interventionist, related to teaching style and which, when engaging with academics, challenges the notion of academic as expert, and academic autonomy (ironically the ideas of expert and autonomy also supports the notion of instructional

“telling” delivery when it relates to teaching students). Such discourses as that of the “born teacher” which exist at the level of the Real allows her to promulgate her continued practices whilst undercutting the idea of training for lecturers/teachers creating a contextual continuity. This discourse, discussed in some length by theorists such as Britzman (1991, 1998), Bruner (1996) and Moore (2004) as well as Quinn (2006), is identified as a capturing a cultural myth and which competes with other teacher discourses such as that of the competent craftsman, or the reflective teacher. By drawing on the particular discourse she does, Tabitha positions herself in relation to the trend towards training for academics, and foregrounds aspects of her own academic identity. The use of such a discourse is also a reflection of confidence and of disciplinary expertise or professionalism in which the academic lecturer is seen as discipline expert and takes on that identity. This identity is the one espoused by Tabitha and Tim.

Despite the resistance at a personal level Tabitha has nevertheless, participated in workshops herself and has mentored newer staff, offering her experience to others as has Tim (see earlier comments). These structures such as courses and workshops which originally emerged at what Brante would identify as an inter-individual level through agential activities of some groups of academics to support academics and create fora for discussion and personal development, have more recently been annexed, at an institutional level, to take on a different function which is more regimented (Brante, 2001b). Perhaps in this example, there is also, here, a resistance to the increasing levels of surveillance and intervention that have, since 1997, become an emergent feature in institutions through activities like mandatory course evaluations, compulsory professional development courses and remediation activities. The discourses of compulsion and compliance have materialized within the academic environment to strengthen those of efficiency and effectiveness as Boud and Brew (2013) intimate. It also however, draws on discourses of “good” and “bad” teachers, where, the intimation is, without training (in the form of accredited courses) many are “bad” (or at least poor or ineffectual) teachers. Credentials are a new form of power. In this way institutions begin to shift towards technologies of responsabilization strongly supported by such discourses (Mascini, Achterberg, & Hartman, 2013). Thus, in this situation Tabitha engages the evaluative discourse of “good” and “bad” teachers, insisting that teachers are “born and not made” thus protecting her position as autonomous academic and therefore allowing resistance to the compliance practices. In exploring the judgemental discourses, and the ways these are being linked to the new structures of performance management, Baatjes (2005) cogently points out, these are becoming ever pervasive. This has had devastating results in the schooling sector allowing for a culture of blame, and

demoralisation and this is now infiltrating higher education. As such it contributes to the anxiety of many taking up the role as Theo comments in his interview.

The introduction of courses to support the development of supervisors has emerged for a range of reasons. At this particular institution courses in supervision began in 2003 and were originally designed drawing on constructivist, collegial and developmental discourses, to enable a sharing of practice through a dialogic approach engaging both experienced and novice supervisors, with the intention that the process would be supportive and encourage reflection. It very much drew on Moore's discourse of the 'reflective practitioner' (Moore, 2004). As such these courses, at an inter-individual level, were voluntary and supportive, providing opportunities for staff to engage the course in ways that met their needs. In this way efforts were made to ameliorate the tendency towards a standardised or formulaic approach and to maximise agency. More recently such courses have also been seen as part of the response towards increasing rapid throughput, and to national requirements for institutional audits where discourses of efficiency and effectiveness pervade discussions. Thus we can see how the fundamental nature of these structures has changed. Originally introduced by practitioners as part of a disciplinary offering (Higher Education), the courses have since been drawn into institutional processes (Human Resources). The documents which build a picture of a need to improve the national figures for postgraduate production in international tables or rankings, and provide the push for improved and rapid economic development are couched in discourses of competition, comparison and productivity which underlie the greater prominence of such courses which are emerging throughout the system (ASSAF, 2010; South Africa, 1997a; South Africa, 2013). As structures, such courses also work in conjunction with other professional development activities, partly designed to answer the needs of national and international quality audits and performance management. They are touted as a response to national initiatives to ensure all employers (even those beyond the education system) engage in upgrading skills, and are couched in the emergent skills discourses noted earlier around skills deficits, scarce skills and the differences between high and low skills (Kraak et al., 2006). Thus the various structures (the course, and different institutional policies as well as various funding processes (interinstitutional) amongst others)⁹ work in complementary fashion whilst running counter to much of the more traditional discourse about academia, supervision and learning. The

⁹ One such funding process is that of a national skills levy on all companies amounting to 1% of their wage bill, part of which is reclaimable on the provision of evidence of staff training.

contradictions and the synergies work within this cultural domain and can be called upon by different agents to promote different agendas. These changes are reflected in recent moves in the institution in this study since 2010 to make such courses mandatory. It is also part of a protective mechanism whereby institutions can indicate that they have provided support and training and therefore those staff identified as problematic can be either 'remediated' or removed. So discourses of remediation, as well as those of accountability reflected through audits and monitoring, fit with the notions of judgement, or 'good' or 'bad' teachers. In such cultural climates staff are labelled as compliant or resistant, and often in need of "re-education". These discourses exist alongside, and are often concealed by, the use of discourses of development and support as well as quality. What may need to be explored in greater depth is the way the different emergent structures are changed or used differently by different groupings.

Accessing whatever support is available may be constrained by the workload demands (this includes getting further degrees) and other time pressures that face academics with expanding functions and therefore they may not be able to make use of any of these opportunities thus they need to draw on their own personal resources and reflection:

I know that there are courses on supervision I know that there's in this university and it's just finding the time to attend them I just don't have time to attend them. You know I mean no one ever trains you to supervise I mean as I said at the very beginning it's like we teach as we've been taught or we teach we find out a way and we we get better I think as we do it for longer we learn more strategies.. ja those things are having the luxury of spending the day going to a course that looks at best practice for supervision is just not something I can afford and I speak for my colleagues here in [discipline] and probably most academics in the humanities as well.. (S I.199-205)

The importance of experience and time to develop is highlighted here by Shandy. Hopes to access training are strongly curtailed by the ever increasing demands which intensify time pressures. The individual is pushed to reflect and develop their own strategies without much assistance.

Another discourse related to the emergence of these courses and other structures such as cohort supervision is that of 'capacity', or 'lack of capacity' which justify identifying courses as a necessity and as possible mechanisms of development (Council on Higher Education, 2009; South Africa, 2013; Vincent-lancrin, 2004). This is especially evident in policy documents and which then get taken up by individual national bodies. In the South African context the CHE has sponsored studies (Council on Higher Education, 2009) which highlight capacity as a key problem, along with other bodies. The ASSAF study indicated in its findings that there was "...limited supervisory capacity" (ASSAF, 2010 p.

17)- capacity being defined largely in terms of staff having a Doctoral degree (although research experience and publication are also a factors). Thus qualification or certification rather than ability is highlighted, and supports the older notion that the qualification means that one can both teach and supervise. The critique by Bhaskar of assuming correlation is synonymous with causality is apposite here, that the constant conjunction of aspects whilst it maybe a necessary condition for causality, it is in itself not sufficient (Bhaskar, 1975). The shift is from disciplines making decisions related to who may supervise to other authorities, and this may be an area for further research. As such the courses are seen as one way to achieve qualification and to help develop skills and contribute in this way to capacity, and higher qualifications also contribute to institutional standings in the ranking tables. It also reflects the idea that exists in some of the literature guiding student choice of supervisor, and some institutional notions, of “good” or ideal supervisors. Zain, Mohaiadin and Hamzah (2011 np) outline this in their conference paper:

The criterion for supervisor selection is that of the supervisor’s research record. According to the informants, the supervisor must be an eminent researcher and one who is highly respected in his/her field. This could be gauged by searching for research papers already published. This would ensure that the student’s work would not be in vain and that her thesis would not be commented on too harshly by the thesis examiner.

These ideas appear also in other texts on supervision such as Phillips and Pugh (Phillips & Pugh, 1994, 2005) and Mouton (2001). Others, however, whilst seeing the value in this approach also indicate that there may equally be drawbacks with this in terms of time, energy and focus that such individuals bring to the process, whereas less prominent and active individuals in these areas may give more time and attention to the process and the student (Wisker, 2001). It raises the real issue of the ability to balance a vibrant research career with good teaching and supervision of students.

Thus new structures are emerging and working together with other elements within the system and these may not always reflect consistency or coherence. Institutional developments and discourses of coercion, control, competition, accountability and judgement may run counter to disciplinary intentions and some discourses which may be more constructive and emancipatory. More entrenched discourses may provide a challenge to newly emerging structures such as courses. The narratives indicate a range of such changes across the 30 years that Tabitha refers to. The introduction of these new processes (structures) may be seen as enabling for some supervisors where they offer support or guidance; as such they still provide opportunity for reflection and discussion. On the other hand they may be a constraint in situations where these have been made mandatory (recently introduced in the institution in this study) often increasing pressures on time

and conflicting with other demands and engendering, as in this case, a resistance. Policies which seek to entrench such formal and mandatory structures provide clear articulation of discourses of compulsion and surveillance “All Deans & Heads of School will take overall responsibility to recommend talent/candidates who require this programme and monitor the completion thereof through Performance Management Agreements” (institutional document 2012)¹⁰ and where the discourses of surveillance and obligation reinforce the evaluative discourses related to performance management and other mechanisms. It also signals a significant shift of power from individuals and disciplines to institutions.

7.2 Conclusion

In this section, emphases emergent from the data which spoke to the way that the respondents took up a new professional role were explored. Postgraduate supervisor is one of several roles that may contribute to an academic identity, becoming a supervisor is a complex and challenging process through which that identity is adapted and developed further. In much the same way as the PhD is seen as a point of acceptance into the academy, becoming a supervisor is a key step along the road to becoming a fully constituted academic. Undertaking this role enables the participants to enact their academicity. It was clear that the notion that one can supervise simply because one has been supervised, or more so because one has done a PhD study oneself is problematic. Whilst individuals do supervise when required, they may muddle along, often making mistakes, or taking quite a long time to develop confidence and skills. Issues of self-efficacy are important here, where self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs someone has about their abilities to carry out their tasks competently or to achieve their goals in a particular role or situation (Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwin, 2006). As such this may improve with time and practice. James’ comment that his skills had developed over time, and they were different from his early phase indicates the ongoing development that happens. There is some evidence from the teaching sphere that a greater sense of self efficacy leads to better learning outcomes for students (Bandura, 1997), and it may be that greater self-efficacy for supervisors may lead to better outcomes for postgraduate students. In the current situation where there is a need to increase postgraduate numbers, and a need for suitably effective supervisors, it is important to provide useful support early in the process, and then ongoing support thereafter, particularly because of the heterogeneous nature of the practice. This may

¹⁰ Reference not given to preserve anonymity

improve and develop a sense of confidence and self-efficacy. The question maybe whether current ideas for professional development focused on supervision are sufficient or adequate? Do they enable individuals or are they yet another constraint that adds to the stress and workload?

Given the situational aspects, the resource that academics had to draw on was their own previous experience as students, which means that individuals either work at reproduction, espousing the values and activities of their supervisors, or through rejection indicating that they can do better through their own changed practice. In both instances they begin to build their personal beliefs and practices about the process which will shape their practice. The fact that some of them are still students themselves may mean that their limited exposure to the supervision experience and process is even more constrained than some others, and as noted this may be in tension with their own practice as supervisors.

The respondents reflected variously on the lack of clarity about expectations and procedures, a sense that they had to learn on their own without much guidance. It is clear that in this situation taking up the role is a moment of uncertainty and risk for all. For most individuals confidence is challenged, and they are in a vulnerable position in relation to their colleagues as they embrace one further element which creates their subjectivity as academic. This has been exacerbated with new pressures for all academic staff to have PhDs, a push to ensure that students move through all postgraduate stages in the shortest time, and so there is a need for those entering academia to come in 'prepared'. However, in these new conditions notions of supervisor as expert, as experienced and engaged researcher, and as experienced in publishing are all called into question. It seems that this and the consequences of this will need revisiting.

Once the provenance of the discipline, the postgraduate sector has now become important to other players. This has seen increasing institutional and national intervention. The new institutional interest in the sector brings two structural elements, discipline and institution, into clear juxtaposition. These spaces may encompass very different cultural norms, with the discipline likely to be more conservative, traditional whilst the institution is driven by economic and national pressures. The shift in power sees institutions having a much greater say and instituting surveillance over the decision making. Thus institutions are beginning to introduce various development programmes, such as courses, and workshops to guide staff, and often enforcing these through policy and requirement of mandatory attendance. This is certainly the case in the institution the respondents practice in. In the South African context such developments are important given the

pressing need for transformation, to develop a new generation of academics as well as support the development of young black academics in particular, and this was reflected through the mentoring programmes along with other measures. These are sometimes resisted by staff in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Newer staff find it difficult to find time amongst the pressures of their academic demands. Such tensions can be seen in the (somewhat contradictory) responses of more experienced academics to the notion of training for supervision where they feel that such a process should simply happen naturally, as part of a cultural mechanism. They see this as an inherent skill for the academic, whilst at the same time they recognise that the process has become more complex, and that there may be some need for support. Several of them have participated in providing training. This seemingly contradictory move highlights another tension. In this discussion, in particular in the response by James, we see the tension between generic (institutionally organised) support and structure, and more situated discipline specific support. This is something that any professional development programme needs to consider, how to perhaps balance these two elements to provide the most effective support within resource constraints.

The highly variable nature of supervision was noted by all the respondents highlighting the difficulty of being able to provide support. As with the dilemmas faced in many highly flexible and uncertain situations, how to assist novices to become expert is a question, so too supervision is seen as diverse in nature with similar types of dilemmas. The constant reference to 'one size doesn't fit all' used by the participants, especially those with experience, attests to this. Drawing on Tabitha and Tim's experience, as well as that of Julia and Theo, it is clear that working with someone, having someone to discuss issues with may be an effective approach for supervisor support. Whilst most mentoring models assume an hierarchical relationship, it is clear here that peer mentoring working together in shared circumstances has been highly successful and may be worth considering as one approach in providing support. Whilst mentoring structures and co-supervision were available these structures were affected by the cultural environment, where cultural mechanisms did not always align with formal structures. Mechanisms can not only be left dormant, they can be taken up and activated by different groups differently and that can affect whether individuals have access to certain resources. Thus in some areas mentoring was implemented and available, whilst in others, such as for Paulina, it was not. Similarly, co-supervision worked for James, whilst in the way it was activated in another situation, it did not work for Paul. This makes it difficult to make broad claims for such mechanisms in relation to successful professional development.

Success in supervision, especially over time deepens confidence and consolidates the position of individuals within their discipline. Thus individual status within the discipline improves as each one moves into the community of practice. Issues of inclusion and exclusion, who has the right to supervise, and as well as who gets supervised and who makes these decisions emerged in the narratives. The close relationship between teaching and supervision is clearly articulated by a number of these respondents and even in the early phases individuals are expressing their teaching and learning beliefs. In the espousing of care or of management, individual perceptions of self and of their values are revealed yet at the same time still positioning the supervisor as gatekeeper. As Kerber (2010) notes such engagements bring together the personal theories one has about learning, as well as how one views oneself, and the values that one holds, whereas in other instances motivations around careers, and other academic activities also influence the process. In the sciences the integration of postgraduate students into the research projects of staff, and to the extent that they are seen as the “workers” indicates the high levels of synergy between two areas of importance for academics (that of teaching and research), and this alignment strengthens the supervision process. Such projects elevate the academic identity, strengthening it and reducing some of the workload that may be required to sustain the various aspects of academic activity. These relational aspects importantly affect the practice.

In the South African situation issues are further complicated by the historical legacies, political, social and educational. Badat (2010 p. 24) maintains that “ In the specific domain of the academic workforce, the consequence was a racialization and gendering which bequeathed South Africa with a predominantly white and male academic work force”. Thus for many from previously excluded groups several of the institutions, and the one providing the context for the study, were somewhat alienating places. Thus entering these spaces, and taking up new roles could exacerbate issues around expectations, heighten anxieties and make transitions more difficult for many. The cultures and behaviours may well be foreign and even at times hostile. This means that those entering may not have the same prior knowledges and experiences to draw on than others. Thus, to be left to make one’s own way in such a space may be even more problematic, and the imperative for some kind of support greater.

Respondents commented on a number of interventions that had been introduced to support initiate supervisors from courses to mentoring. These structures were noted but rarely endorsed as highly successful. Whilst Theo reflects on how successful the mentoring process has been in his case, and Julia appreciates working with a co-supervisor, most others mention interventions briefly in passing,

in one or two instances noting the constraints in relation to the courses (time or coercion), or to other interventions. It highlights the way in which structures are encountered and employed by different individuals. What is more difficult to examine is how, when they are engaged and enacted differently, the relationship between different engaging agents can be analysed. This is something that I needed to grapple with in the analysis process without necessarily a clear resolution.

One might wish to question the underlying assumptions related to the introduction of such structures, and wonder at the limited evidence of success of many formal professional development measures (Clark, Livingstone, & Smaller, 2012). In such a varied context, and like in many educational spaces, there is a need to be flexible and adaptable. The variety of intersecting structural and cultural elements gives rise to differential outcomes. It requires time to develop understandings and strategies, which improve with experience and this may be difficult to capture in the ways in which professional development has traditionally been conceptualised. The question is whether emergent strategies are appropriate and can develop the required capacity quickly enough, what is the quality of the strategies that are developed, how far do these practices help or hinder within the current contexts? Do they represent quick fixes whilst remaining quite superficial in effect? These I think remain key questions in this relation.

From a time when supervision and postgraduate study rested primarily in the domain of the discipline, governed by disciplinary conventions and individual departmental ways of working, as well as significant individual responsibility (although overseen by institutional committees), the respondents noted that within their context the postgraduate environment is becoming more constrained. New emergent practices structured through regulations, policies, greater bureaucracy and activities such as supervision courses, formal mentoring projects and co-supervision practices were becoming the norm. These structures exert their power (SEPs) in terms of control and oversight. However, as can be seen individuals in their engagement may respond using their own PEPs to identify such as opportunities or constraints. There is thus a shift in decision making from disciplines to institutional levels and beyond, influenced by national mechanisms such as in South Africa, the CHE and the NQSF. These institutions draw on so called 'evidence based' studies that they have instituted to provide a rationale which strengthens their drives. Thus structural properties may act in tandem. Whilst these structures may provide a more supportive environment as individuals take up the practice, it also ensures that individuals are more likely to be influenced by institutional and national interests than previously. The shift of decision making from individuals and disciplines to a more institutionalised position sees a shift in power within institutions. They become shaping

processes (Fitzmaurice, 2013) to which individuals respond in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, by exploring responses at the micro level, it becomes possible to see how supervisors may exert their agency in a range of ways to adapt, avoid or embrace the opportunities or constraints offered.

The responses of these individuals would indicate that a situated process of co-learning, constructing knowledge in the workplace may, in collaboration with more formal interventions, be more successful than a single monolithic approach. It suggests that the workplace may need to encourage a more developmental ethos, not just for students but also for their staff if professional development is to be effective. In some of these responses we can see that there is a resistance to the shifting of the decision making, especially, but not only, from the more experienced staff. They do not recognise the legitimacy of those outside the disciplines to provide guidance, tending to draw that responsibility back into the discipline. Thus James indicates that should there be courses, he would be the one, as a senior staff member, offering it. This reflects one of the constant tensions that are encountered by education developer in Higher Education between the specific and the generic, discipline based versus more general interventions. Institutions providing a varied and inter-related learning environment in which different possibilities, formal courses, workshops, different forms of mentoring or co-supervising and ongoing informal discussion groups could provide useful areas for support, induction and idea generation. To allow for greater engagement time needs to be made for these activities for any who wish to attend, whilst participation by all parties can be encouraged by ensuring that such are incentivised in various ways, or at least not penalised (even indirectly). In contexts such as South Africa this would serve other purposes as well, since it allows for not only a process of socialisation in a situation of transformation (desirable or questionable), but also provides a space where new ideas may be introduced and therefore may also become a mechanism for institutional change. Thus it might assist to 'fast track' new academics into their various roles, support them as they practice, allowing them to draw on experience as well as peer support, whilst at the same time building a variety of networks through the interactions. A greater number of opportunities and spaces for both staff and students to interact, across levels of experience, as well as within and across disciplinary borders, has potential to develop capacity, and in a relatively short space of time.

Chapter Eight: Confronting the Context: enablements and constraints

The last chapter explored the experiences of supervisors from the perspective of how they take up this new role, how they became supervisors. How do supervisors learn their craft and how do they shape this role as they enter into it? This chapter however, takes cognisance of the context within which they operate. This is an area that is under-researched and yet can significantly affect the way individuals behave. Thus in pursuing an exploration of how individual staff members experience supervision as a supervisor it is necessary to see how they portray the context within which they operate and how it affects their supervision practice.

8.1 That's the Way it is: Systems, Structures and Cultures

Whilst experiences were often initially described at the level of the Empirical, or at the level of the Actual which encompasses the empirical as well, it was clear that the environments in which individuals in this study found themselves, as well as their own histories, played a part in shaping their activities. The ways in which individuals confront various structures or respond to the cultural milieu of their disciplines and institutions and make choices from the possible opportunities is important in their evolving practices and their own identities as academics.

8.1.1 Students are the Lifeblood: the Student Factor in Supervision

Much of the literature focuses on the effect of supervisors on students, and given the consequences for students this is hardly surprising. Another over-riding focus is on the supervisor – student relationship, what is less explored is the effect of the student, their characteristics, behaviour and influences on the supervisors in their capacity as academics. This broadens the perspective from just that on the pedagogical exchange. As a mechanism, at the level of the Real supervision is broadly seen as an interaction between a supervisor and a student, in what has come to be understood to be generally an intense relationship. Without one or the other there is no supervision, a supervisor cannot supervise without a student, and without postgraduate students there is less research and no supervision. As Tim maintains students *“... are the life blood of the university. If you have good postgraduate students you have a good university”* (T&T I. 136). The importance of finding

supervisors, and of the quality of supervisors and supervision predominates in the guide literature. However, less frequently is this explored from the perspective of the supervisor and the effect students have on their practice (Guerin et al., 2015). It raises the question as to what constitutes the 'good' student given the numerous changes at this level. What the interviews revealed was the various ways in which different structures and cultural configurations featured in affecting the supervisor and therefore the process. One key aspect that has great influence is the student and what they bring.

8.1.1.1 Attracting Students, Taking up the 'Abandoned' and Getting Started: First Supervisions

In the initial phases newer members of staff (especially young and inexperienced members) may find it difficult to get students to supervise since students and other staff may not yet know them, or their interests and strengths to be able to direct students. Issues of hierarchy within the disciplinary groups also play a role here and in early phases not only are individuals either not yet part of a key disciplinary or institutional group (ie: Primary agent), or still very peripheral in a group, they are often not yet established as researchers or academics. Theo clearly articulated his difficulties with this, and it is a thread that ran through his interview, a point that he returned to on a number of occasions:

I think at the moment I can say with confidence that yes I can hold my ground in the kind of research that I am involved in it is just a matter now of getting suitably enthusiastic candidates...(T I 41-43)

...what I'm trying to say is I'm not attracting as many students as people who have been in this game for years .. you will find the choice of supervisor is influenced by word of mouth maybe the parents or the cousins have been through a particular supervisor you know like there are people who have been here for more than 25 years....(T I.286-290)

So he indicates the strength of word of mouth and how prospective students may gravitate to those they know, drawing on the reputation of those who are already established. His experience at the level of the Actual links to discourses at the level of the Real. This is the discourse of 'the established and experienced researcher as supervisor'. As such this discourse constructs, in part, a discourse of 'good supervisor' and in part a discourse of 'established, practising researcher'. Such notions are mirrored in the discourse constructed around supervision in many of the texts guiding students where the "... 'ideal' supervisor should:

- Have a good track record as a *scholar* or *scientist* in a particular field of expertise
- Be *experienced* in supervisory practices

- Show *interest* in your research topic and the envisaged studies
- Have sufficient *time* available for supervision (Mouton, 2001 p. 20)

This is an entrenched discourse, however there are other texts which provide a challenge for this and begin to allow alternative discourses to emerge. So Wisker whilst nodding towards the 'ideal' indicates some of the flaws in this way of constructing supervisors and in so doing highlights certain contradictions particularly in relation to time and focus:

...you could find out about potential supervisors and their specialisms by looking up departmental web pages which usually indicate research and publication interests. ...If you can take an active part in the selection of who supervises you, you need to take some of the following issues into consideration. Do remember that sometimes the most eminent person is the busiest and can afford the least time for supervision, while the least experienced might give you more time. Sometimes we pick our supervisors for their specialist knowledge, at other times for their experience in the dominant methodologies we are going to use... (Wisker, 2001 p. 30).

In this there are echoes of Tim's discourse of 'no one size fits all' or 'no recipe'. Subjectively younger staff may not yet be seen as 'expert' or experienced and therefore given less desirable students.

In discussions with previous students (albeit often family members), drawing on knowledge from their previous studies, and from other sources, students make their choices also considering the discourse which constructs particular pictures of the 'good supervisor'. In this instance this issue emerged within the context of a science discipline where students often need to join research projects for their studies. Perhaps what it does not indicate is that bodies such as the NRF, which operate as mechanisms at the level of the Real, also exerting their SEPs, reinforcing this power dynamic through systems of ratings and funding. More experienced staff are more likely to get funding and thus begins the process of establishing ongoing projects, and 'old boys' networks therefore becoming exclusionary in part. In science where often funding is vital to the research itself it can be the deciding factor. These may be important elements in establishing an academic identity. The way students may select a supervisor is one in which, as Theo reflects, word of mouth may be highly influential – parents or aunts and uncles and perhaps siblings guide students towards people they know as teachers and as researchers, and therefore who are potential supervisors, or with whom they have strong personal connections and this 'may work against the newer supervisors. These are the disciplinary caretakers:

erm their former students are now parents of the new you know wave of students so they will get that influence from home say you know I had professor so and so maybe when I was in third year.. (T I.288-291)

The effect is twofold, firstly on numbers of students, but also on students of calibre who sign on. The importance of building a team was clear for Theo who was working towards establishing his research career quite consciously. Theo engages the discourse of 'established' or 'recognised' supervisor. This emerges distinctly through the interview in Theo's discussions about his attempts to establish himself in relation to the other academics and beyond. In this he positions himself with the discipline and with industry partners, he is 'holding his own'. He indicates he is still moving into the disciplinary community, or what Lave and Wenger (1991) would term moving from peripheral participation into community, but this is a slow process. Archer (2007a) would suggest that many of these individuals are only Primary agents, and as we see here without ways of influencing, as novices they are involuntarily placed in contexts in which they are largely subject to a variety of constraints.

Theo does raise a different possibility for recruitment, through other mechanisms such as teaching on undergraduate and honours courses (another academic role) which allows students to get to know the lecturers:

...because at third year level that is where we try to sort of advertise ourselves look this is what my research programme entails blah blah blah normally we start taking them from honours onward so the students often start off with honours level they somehow end up doing masters either with me directly or in that co-supervisory role either with industry or another institution. (T I 201-207)

The educational structures, which see progression of students through the curriculum, most commonly doing several qualifications within a single institution, may be enabling for supervisors. This mechanism may be under threat of disruption in a fast globalising sector, which is prioritising mobility although currently this does not reflect in this institution. Such courses and progression provide exposure for the teaching staff and through their interactions with students they become known in a number of different ways. This may help with recruitment, certainly of local students. In his reflection it seems as though Theo sees recruitment as largely a personal responsibility. This interconnects strongly with the newer emergent discourse of measurement around how many students are supervised, and how many graduated. The discourse he engages in, which we might label 'commercial', is consistent with this. He sees a need for academics to "advertise" themselves which is consistent with the notion of an educational service which people buy, and with students being clients or customers. These are the technologies of power that he engages. Later he talks

readily of his “boss” positioning himself thus as an employee and also draws on this discourse to style himself as a consultant. This is a powerful discourse at the level of the Real which has many ramifications as noted by Baatjes, Molesworth et. al, and others (Baatjes, 2005; Barnett, 2011; Molesworth et al., 2009). It is clear here that knowledge is seen as a commodity, consultants trade in their knowledge a changing notion of such an academic within the educational context..

So being new and facing difficulties in recruiting or attracting students may hamper staff in two major ways, firstly slowing their progress through the system, and secondly especially in the sciences, retarding their research and making them dependent on senior and established staff for longer. As such this would contribute to developing a strongly hierarchical structure in departments and disciplines, highlighting the limited power of new staff. As gatekeepers, established staff have both institutional power and legitimacy, which has not yet accrued to the new staff.

Another consequence of being new, and therefore a Primary agent without much influence, it maybe that in some instances students will be allocated. With newer staff, or with the newness of the position, staff may find that they end up with the students who are struggling (perhaps in part because they do not yet have a number of students they are supervising). They may be allocated students who have lost their supervisors either through being in the system too long, or through supervisors moving away, or they may be given the students the more established supervisors don't wish to (or won't) take on, or they may find these students in their search for students to supervise. Two or three of the respondents indicated that they had had this experience. These may be the more difficult cases to supervise, dealing with students who may face particular problems or may have had quite negative experiences to date. This means that from the beginning supervisors face challenges with those students, but they may also have the enthusiasm and patience to get the students through the process. Tabitha speaks of her early experience, and through this shows her commitment and caring for the students she deals with. She begins here to articulate her values through a discourse of the 'caring teacher' which is reflective of her emerging academic identity (Moore, 2004; Poore & Walkington, 2010; Shaw, 2012):

I also picked up a couple along the way who were abandoned by other supervisors and that was not so good – I mean alright I am thinking about one particular guy who had a most unsatisfactory supervisor and so I was so he was then relegated to me... something I that I felt quite strongly about because I felt this guy had had a raw deal so it took quite a lot of work so these are the early ones I am thinking about. (T&T I. 48 -53)

Several discourses intersect here. The discourse of ‘abandonment’ which has also been used by others (McAlpine & Paulson, 2010) or as articulated by Wisker and Robinson ‘orphans’ (Wisker & Robinson, 2013), and which connects quite strongly to the notion of the ‘supervisor as rescuer’ but which also indicates an awareness of the emotional aspects of studying for students on the part of the supervisor. These are students who lose their supervisors either through staff moving on, retiring or for other reasons. They often exist in a kind of ‘no man’s land’ until someone takes them on or is assigned to them – a case in need of rescue. They may often be weaker or less confident students, or possibly just more diffident since they have not vigorously pursued finding a new supervisor. Such discourse as Wisker and Robinson (2013) indicate, is riven with metaphors of loss, bereftment at the level of the Empirical and it points, at the level of the Actual, towards possible negligence on the part of the departing supervisor which is rightly or wrongly how they are often seen by others (as Tabitha notes “*a most unsatisfactory supervisor*”), and especially on that of the discipline or institution (“*that was not so good*”). Once more notions of good and poor supervisor emerge, the part of the supervisor is foregrounded whilst the role or rather the culpability, of the institution is more muted. This may be especially because supervision is often explored in terms of relationships and the more administrative and institutional aspects are less foregrounded.

Despite the “relegation” Tabitha nevertheless embraces the occasion, and begins to articulate the values relating to teaching and supervision that underpin her academic identity “I felt quite strongly” and engaging discourses of fairness and responsibility in relation to supervision and to teaching perhaps more broadly. This is a connection with, and responsibility to, first and foremost the student, and the task rather than the institution. The image she constructs through this discourse is a strong commitment to her teaching engaging the discourse of the ‘caring and responsible teacher’ whilst constructing the student as someone who had not only been abandoned, but had been unfairly or wrongly treated (“*he had had a raw deal*”). As such then the supervisor is not only a carer but also someone who rescues. More importantly this is an aspect of teacher identity that is embraced – the responsible custodian who holds the interest of the student as important - by Tabitha and other respondents in this study. In particular she notes how much work and effort this took, a cost that making the choice to support the student carried with it. This is similar to the experience that James explored in his example earlier. In like manner, Paulina some years later indicates a similar experience:

Wow... I guess the... I had one particular student that I found in the system for so many many years that I was able to take through the system in less than 2 years that for me said that.. or sort of what’s the word... You know earlier I said that our students need a lot more support they need a bit of a push rather than just say

they are adults.... So I actually had a student that I found in the system who's been in the system for many many years and were able to just finish what we were doing in less than 2 years. So I think that for me's a unique experience ... (Pa I 282-291)

It is clear that she gained confidence and satisfaction from this particular incident. She 'found' the lost student who was in need of 'support'. Like Tabitha she steps in and is able to facilitate a successful completion, and there is a sense here of teacher as saviour (Poore & Walkington, 2010). However, these kinds of cases can also mean dealing with demoralised students, those who have stalled or who are struggling in the system as Priya comments:

But for the first masters student it was not all that easy because I was learning as well as trying to apply what I had learned basically at the same time... being the first candidate er that I had was basically a student that had been supervised by another supervisor and that supervisor was extremely busy having a number of other candidates to supervise and himself was doing a higher degree and basically the time for submission ...so the candidate that I first had was feeling very neglected about the supervision process that he was going through and then approached me and also wanted to take a new line. Of course he did want to continue with the topic that he had but was told by the supervisor if he was changing he should take a new topic altogether so we basically started a whole new topic... we were quite successful in doing our proposal...just spoken to him yesterday.. mentioned to me that he is more or less completed his data collection...(Pr I 50 – 83)

The dynamics between supervisors, and especially in the process of changing supervisor, may be fraught, especially where the student is part of a larger project or funded through a supervisor's grant. However one can see this supervisor's growing confidence as the student progresses well and responds positively to her. She positions herself as the 'caring' supervisor, in contrast to the 'neglectful' supervisor. She does not mention however the many implications of taking on such students for the supervisor in terms of workload or productivity, or on the throughput rates. These may be even more pronounced in cases like this where the student has to restart his project. What is clear is the commitment to the students in each of these scenarios where the supervisor in their new position is projected as 'saviour', responsible and caring, rescuing the neglected and abandoned student. It may be that in these early phases academics are still crafting their own priorities, values and developing their academic identities and therefore are more flexible in terms of responding to these opportunities. Several of the respondents seemed to embrace their role as teacher in the supervisory context and whilst this commitment is retained as they develop, often supervisors move on from the 'saviour' aspect, but not necessarily from their commitment, as they establish their academic identity. All of these tales occurred in the early phases of supervision for this group.

With the introduction of workload formulae and other regulations the number of postgraduate students per academic depending on level has been mandated by Senate (2011) and thus a number of structures at the level of the Real work together to shape the context and influence the way supervisors work. This puts particular pressure upon new and younger staff members in the situation where they are struggling to build research teams or find students to supervise. In trying to establish themselves as researchers, new academics, especially in science, also need to attract students into their projects. To a large extent it constrains the power of individuals in their ability to choose students of requisite ability, and within their fields of expertise. Where individuals are 'short' of candidates they may well be allocated these from elsewhere. This raises substantive issues relating to the assumptions that underpin supervision, in relation to student supervisor relationships that might develop, and quality whilst exposing individual supervisors to much greater risk.

The issue of finding students and student numbers at postgraduate level affects not just individual supervisors, which is what is examined here, but it is also an issue confronting disciplines and will be taken up again a little later.

8.1.1.2 Chasing or Keeping Up: Changing Student Characteristics

Finding or having students to supervise may be important, but of equal importance is the type of student that is taken on. In the same way that the literature identifies the importance of the supervisor to the process, especially from the student's perspective, so supervisors identify the student and their abilities as a key enabler or constraint in the process of supervision.

8.1.1.2.1 The Calibre of Student

Several of the respondents engaged a discourse which we might label 'student calibre'. A number of these supervisors indicated that some students are more able than others, and that this had a significant effect on their practice. Students were seen as running so fast supervisors needed to keep up, or as needing to be chased. The whole structure of supervision rests on the relationship between the key characters, that of the supervisor and student. The characteristics of each of these interactants shape the process and result in different practices. Thus the calibre of student and how this affected the process was highlighted by the interviewees and returned to on several occasions as well as how this triggers further emergent practices. Tim and Tabitha indicate:

Tim: we've got one PhD student who is writing up now who runs so fast we can hardly keep up with him ...

Tab: others we've had to chase and nag and so on ... so there really is a spectrum. I think one of the things we've both come to is be a bit more selective you know you take in a Masters student they've been good in honours because honours is very regimented.. and then they cruise and you can stand on your head and they cruise ... we've had a few dilettantes believe me who come from who I think come from quite well off backgrounds and who really enjoy just being here and they really didn't seem to care if they took three years four years it didn't seem to matter and those are the ones that give me the biggest grief you know they've got ability and you know that actually they don't care and I care ...(T&T I. 82-100).

In this case student ability and student attitude to their studies is important not only for the supervisor in the institutional climate of performance, but also for the outcome of projects where students work within projects. So through the recognition of the costs for the individual academic, supervisors enacting their agency begin to devise their own strategies for ameliorating the problems. Theo delineates clearly at the level of the Actual how students can act as a constraint on what can be done and how supervisors might respond:

Depending on the kind of students I have at a particular one time that can also add a completely different dimension to how I supervise a particular project 'cause sometimes you get a student who takes the idea and runs with it and even develops it further you know. On the other hand some years you get students think 'do I really have to do this'. So I mean my feeling towards supervision is that it depends pretty much on the students that I have in that year because with some students you can limit the scope of your expectations.. (T I.64-70)

As with other supervisors he notes that the good students move ahead without much need for hand holding, although perhaps they still need guidance in the form of restraining their enthusiasm. So they lighten the load for supervisors, as opposed to those who are just going through the motions:

With some students you can let them run with the ideas and sort of guide them so my role as supervisor in that case where I have a student who is really enthusiastic in what they have to do is to sort of guide them not to be too enthusiastic because what I have learnt through my brief experience is that when you simply let them go they do a little bit of that a little bit of that and at the end they don't have like a concrete story to put together so ja kind of have to hold onto the reins a little but not to kind of say don't do this do that which is what happens with what can happen with some students who really just thinking I am here to get a piece of paper that says [name of institution] ...(T I.70-77)

Others note that the ability or the attitude of students has changed, especially with the growing focus on vocationalism and instrumental study, and Theo also attributes the change to declining student morale but does not elaborate on this. He does show however, how this particularly affects the young academic trying to attract students and build up a research team:

It is just a matter now of getting suitably enthusiastic candidates I don't know if you are aware that the I don't know if what I call student morale in the last

couple of years has been going down so it has become more and more difficult to get the kind of student that every supervisor would like to have.. (T I.42-46)

In terms of his role as supervisor, which inevitably is closely intertwined with the several other roles that make up the professional activities of academics, Paul also noted specific constraints. With the changing, diversifying student body, and increasing numbers, as well as the strong drive to increase enrolment in postgraduate study, he indicates clearly that student ability is an enabling or constraining factor.

But one must also mention that erm the calibre of the student has been a huge problem in my experience because at Masters you would think that the student they have got the basics of research methods but you may find that they do not and so it is a nightmare to have to go all the way to help the student understand what we mean by the smallest of concepts of research... (sic). (P I. 43-46)

Thus mechanisms outside the educational arena also affect the process. Prior educational, as well as social and familial backgrounds affect the way students cope with the system and can enable or constrain the learning and teaching process. Who is accepted and why, are also key influences. He reflects that supervisors need particular skills to be able to facilitate the process in these circumstances:

... we still have many many students from the old [education] system who even if they were to go through these three research modules that we currently have are still not at the level that one would expect and so first with in most cases large numbers of students I think the quality of supervision has still to improve. (P I. 90-94)

In this particular context many students are hampered by completely inadequate schooling, many are not only first time university entrants, but come from a background that may provide little or no conception of what tertiary education is, what it entails or what it sets out to accomplish beyond a very crude instrumentalism. Another institutional mechanism which is seen to contribute to the admission of 'weaker' students, is the entry requirement which provides gatekeeping mechanisms, and which in recent years has been seen to be sliding lower. Lowering entrance requirements from a 65% aggregate pass at the honours level to enter Masters, to currently 60% or less was a way to increase numbers and access. Staff note this as a contributing factor to the perceived change in calibre of students. Finally, students engaged in a coursework Masters may find the thesis component more difficult for a range of reasons. So there is an interacting of mechanisms at the level of the Real that have an important impact at the level of the Actual and Empirical. The discourses of student ability and calibre, policies governing access and progress, the drive to increase postgraduate numbers, massification, of being a research intensive institution, drive for rankings,

discourses of Africanisation, equity and transformation with many others play into the process. Shandy feels that the emphasis on numbers had a range of consequences and she is particularly critical of institutional moves which allow access for greater numbers of students yet do not allow for support of the kinds of students who are then in the system:

It's a difficult comment to make because I believe we should be pushing students into graduate study but I think the lowering of entry into graduate studies to things like 60 percent has had a huge impact on the capacity of students to cope erm and as a supervisor what it means is that you see students floundering and taking longer and longer to complete because they are just are struggling and however much help you give them they need a lot more hand holding so I mean not that's not necessarily a bad thing but it means that you are spending much longer with the student many more hours many more years sometimes... (S l.142-148)

She is clear about why and points to the financial gains that institutions receive for graduate students. Financial imperatives drive institutions. The tensions between good education and the financial imperatives, between the institutional drives and the student needs are highlighted in this and other interviews. There is direct tension between more students and pressure for time to completion.

Lowering of the entry level means we can push students through I'm also quite cynical in thinking that higher education is becoming a little bit like a factory.. and term this idea of pushing thinking of a masters as a kind of job creation as an entry into corporate or into government so that what you.. happens is that you are pushing students through rather than nurturing students through (S l.155-160)

Concerns for the quality issues emerge strongly here. She clearly espouses a developmental and educational approach in contradistinction to the more marketised thrust being adopted by the institution.

In reviewing students entering the performing arts she endorses the general perception of diminishing student ability emphasizing that supervision is not just about the dissertation but requires a focus on other elements as well. These greater complexities are affected by student ability:

... you are not just supervising an academic dissertation... you are also supervising an artistic process or a reflection on a process so that's those are the first first two things that perhaps I want to say ... its quite a big question I think it also depends on the nature of the student.. erm you get some students who are absolutely capable of reading vastly on their own assimilating knowledge, handing in work, making deadlines and I mean we always call them the kind of gifts to work with.. but increasingly I think also because of the crisis with

education and you know with primary education I think students require from what I've experienced perhaps in the last three years and this is across the board students are requiring more time with you.. and more time on on things that are perhaps not graduate supervision but things like writing skills... which is not really what I imagine you should be doing at masters phd level... but that also changes the nature of how we work... (S I 47-68)

The growing cost to supervisors in terms of time and effort with the more diverse group of students taking up postgraduate studies is clearly articulated here. The increasing span of academic work may be true about supervision in other disciplines as well, where a range of activities as well as research and dissertations are being learnt about and which it falls upon the supervisor to engage with.

Paulina raises similar issues. In her case the students are what are often referred to as 'non-traditional' students (ie: they are mature students, part-time, working professionals). They bring their working lives, and family issues with them. She articulates the influence that this has on her as supervisor and her interactions:

... I would say erm it it's been its been interesting I guess in a way to .. because most of my students have been with the profile of the students we have generally at [this institution] postgraduate especially in [faculty name] is that we have erm erm mature students. So that's been the kind of erm experience that I had.. that I had to deal with people who were quite mature and people who were rather sensitive to some of the things ...you have got to be a little bit more careful when you deal with them a mature person who's also a professional somewhere. (Pa I.87-95)

What emerges for supervision more generally in this group, and for each individual, is that student characteristics affect supervisor reactions in a range of different ways, as does what students bring with them in terms of background. They also interact with the individual academic identity. The kinds of students that are attracted to postgraduate study vary from discipline to discipline, the 'one size fits all' does not readily apply. This affects the emergent practices in disciplines and shapes individual practices occurring in the cultural spaces created by disciplinary beliefs. Thus it is at the level of the Actual that variations in relation to how the mechanisms are instantiated occur, where different mechanisms may come into conjunction in different contexts and where differences become apparent.

Like other supervisors interviewed James raises the issue of the calibre of students and their effects on supervision. In particular he notes that students come not only with different abilities but also with different attitudes and motivations, and this affects the process. Such attitudes can be a constraint adding to the work the supervisor has to do and thereby constituting a cost. The growing

neo-liberal influences can clearly be seen in the kinds of concerns that he raises. Mechanisms which pressurise for time to completion, and productivity units have consequences at the level of the Actual, as well as the more traditional drivers such as research. Thus there is a growing concern to choose the 'right' kind of student and an increasing reluctance to take on more difficult cases (thus in many ways becoming exclusionary and elitist) and several of the respondents exercise their agency by deciding to become more selective. However this is in direct contradiction given the enormous national (and international) drive towards massification and to increase postgraduate numbers drastically (South Africa, 1997a; South Africa, 2013). For the supervisor, like James, in his context he has become much more selective about the students he has taken on so that he can pursue the concerns that he values and in this respect exercises his agency when he can, within the system, in relation to who is accepted:

I am becoming much stricter and I have become much stricter about who I will take on especially as PhD or Masters by thesis level sometimes the other times you don't have so much choice.. I would make that distinction I think that is quite important one erm some students find that much more difficult than others ... (J1 I. 73-75)

Given that he is one of few working in his particular disciplinary area, and as a senior academic with a research record this may mean that he has more ability to refuse to take on students than newer supervisors and more novice academics. The way that the growing instrumentality and utilitarianism affects the students and their engagement can be a real constraint. As a consequence of a much more utilitarian world often students are more interested in the credential than really developing their skills and contributing to knowledge. This creates tensions for supervisors like James who rather look for 'passion' related to the topic to be studied:

Sometimes I think people do a PhD for the wrong motive ah there's a good story here .. my own view is that the only real reason for doing a PhD is you want to become some sort of academic erm but I I think sometimes people have got another motive another good motive and that is that they are passionate about a particular topic and a PhD gives them a reason an excuse and an introduction.. permission to go and investigate that topic closely ... it gives them a sort of a degree of respectability so I think that's a good motive ... they want to do it anyway the PhD is just a bit of a bonus but there are other people and sometimes its .. and it comes out when people are talking about potential topics who want a PhD for status reasons (J2 I.195-207)

The issue of the instrumentality of a qualification and the relationship of the qualification to a genuine aspect of research and individual growth was however illustrated differently by his own account of gaining a doctorate:

I must admit my motive for doing a PhD which I did quite late in life erm how old was I I was well into my forties I'm just trying to think if I was older than that or not.. yeah let's say late forties er and I said to myself right I was in Australia and I had a masters and was publishing a lot and quite enjoying life and so on and I thought if I want to work in a developing country context which I do I did.. I don't want to get knocked out by not having a PhD therefore I think I'll do one and with that in mind I then thought of a topic I looked around for a topic and eventually found one.. this is something that's got to interest me for a long time and my problem is that I have many interests and I get satisfied quite easily with something and then I flutter off to something else but then I did find one and interestingly enough when I got this job here erm I saw the advertisement a PhD in [discipline] and so I said after I had got it I said to the head of school well would I have got the job without a Phd she said absolutely not so as it turned out the reason for getting it was well and truly met... (j l.208-221 int.2)

It is clear that although he brought an instrumental aspect to his own attainment, without the passion for the topic it would have been problematic.

Through his tale the notion of the calibre of student also emerged as well as the effects of motivation – issues relating to which students should or should not do postgraduate work which reflects back into the issue of passion and commitment are clear. The demands of other professional or work contexts sometimes pressured students into taking the qualification. Such mechanisms as increased salary for a further qualification or other similar mechanisms play a part:

My other classic story on this is a student... who was the ... friend of a [member of staff] .. so he turned up one day or she introduced him to me and he's interested in [topic] which is what I was interested in I thought 'strange', but he was interested in [topic] because he wanted a PhD on anything and I seemed to be a reasonable person until.. he proved a very difficult person to supervise erm because he would write a lot he could easily write 20 pages in one night .. and drop it under your door the next .. but it was largely nonsense ... either he hadn't read or hadn't understood so I kept getting these large slabs of paper under my door.. and after about a year I said look we've got to sit down and talk about this and ... for some people doing a Phd is an easy road and things slot into place and they are working at the right level and so on but that doesn't seem to be the case for you, you are really struggling ... do you really want to get a Phd ... he said something which I think is absolutely true and which I am really quite sorry about he said look I want to become a policy advisor ... and he said if I am Dr [Hitler] people will listen to me if I am Mr [Hitler] they won't he's right unfortunately the title carries a lot but ... I didn't say it to him at the time but if you're talking crap it doesn't matter if you are Dr [Hitler] or Mr [Hitler] it's still crap... (J l.221-247 int.2)

This consolidates some of the aspects he described in other instrumental examples given, in which he highlighted the fact that often students also enrol so that they can get funding for a range of

activities. In this example the student was focused on getting a scholarship in the range of \$10 000. He noted that often such students once accepted tend to disappear and not respond to prompts or questions, and sometimes do not do the work. They have been attracted by the funding.

Yet he was not unsympathetic to the way student lives impacted their studies. In reviewing his group he noted that most of his current group of 20 students were part-time and distance, also noting the influence of having working students. Whilst 12 were working well, 2 or 3 were being affected by their work demands and still others were in a situation which makes it improbable that they could complete.

There are another 2 or 3 who are much more I think that their work demands are much more complex and whilst they want to do it I I 've got my doubts that they will be able to find the time to do the work because I think there's always the tendency to underestimate the amount of time this is going to take and then there are I think the other ones .. are probably not going to make it ... I think they've a degree of difficulty on top of.. just work demands like horrendous work demands.... (J2 l. 314-329)

Whilst a supervisor tries to ensure that they are prepared for the needs of the student, the student and their contexts can also be a factor affecting the supervisor. The situation of the student may make them easier or more difficult to work with, and the constraints facing the student may also affect the supervision process. It is these aspects that contribute to the "cost" of taking them on. Julia notes some of the constraints that can add to the process and how these affect her practice:

I have arranged to see the student once a month which might be sufficient or might not because I find she is also working full time and once a month is about as much as we can do.. what does get me is if I have a piece of work from her to look at at a time when I have a thousand other things to do and I'm often worried that I wouldn't really pay enough attention to detail erm so I find that challenging. I find that difficult you never have two days to sit with a piece of work and analyse it or follow up different references to see if they are relevant or so on...I found that quite challenging the juggling of time my time and her time (Ja l. 46 – 54)

She is particularly cognisant that supervisors have other calls on their time, and these too can enable or constrain the process. Thus both participants in the supervision bring with them aspects which can affect the relationship and process. A number of mechanisms at the level of the Real interact here, structures of academic work, as well as work more generally and family (for students) and the demands of these, study which may be full or part-time create situations supervisors and students confront.

Paulina recognises that the characteristics of the students also affect her responses. As noted above the students are what are often referred to as non-traditional students (ie: they are mature students, part-time). As they tend to be more mature this places her as a young woman in a particular and possibly difficult relationship to them, both in terms of age and culture. In the more traditional cultures of many of the students there is a strong patriarchal tendency and so women are not seen as authority figures, and this is exacerbated by age, where young people should 'respect' (ie: defer to) their elders. This is a difficult subjective space. Thus different cultural mechanisms, social and academic may be in tension with one another in this supervisory space. This can interfere in the process and is one which she must work to negotiate with her students which we engage with a little later.

Thus, highlighting several mechanisms at the level of the Real, she indicates that much of what interferes in the process are personal issues and issues related to work but also a system premised on traditional students (school leavers, full time) which may not be accommodating of working students. One result of massification and the greater diversification can be seen in this example. This can be a constraint for both student and supervisors. Students need different approaches at different times in their study. Other interviewees (eg: Priya and Shandy) also reflected on the assumptions about traditional students and how this was often inimical to their student intakes, and again Paulina notes how the assumption of full time, young students is directly opposed to the kinds of students she deals with. In particular the older student, returning to study, needs structure and support which is often usefully offered through a coursework process but which is being phased out. This points to the contradictions within a system which generally is claiming a shift towards lifelong learning, a learning society and the reality of what this means in the classroom.

The way the degree is offered may be important for students. An example is whether the degree is offered by coursework or thesis only. For Masters, as a mechanism, the coursework component is seen by some of the respondents to work well providing the push needed through the structure and setting of deadlines. It may provide a foundation, refresher or consolidation of disciplinary knowledge for some. However, once students leave to do the dissertation that 'push' may be diminished. Paulina discusses this effect on her students noting the importance of the higher degree of structure to help in the supervision approach. She feels that at the PhD level this may also be an issue especially for part-time, working students so that processes such as PhD groups which allow for greater levels of structure may be helpful but may also be difficult to implement:

so I may not have participated in those erm modules and structures but I have seen from where I was that it was a very useful kind of structure that sort of helps them to to move fast because they know they've got deadlines and they know that they don't want to be behind others and it also sort of provides that kind of social support I guess to know that I am not in this alone there's other students there's other supervisors there's other people and so they can share their experiences not only with the supervisor but also with other students .. (Pa l. 203-209)

She feels that this is important for the kinds of students that she supervises

I think because they're [professional], full time [professionals] they need more of that kind of support than other people who are not working or who are studying full time. (Pa l.219-221)

However, whilst institutions diminish support for coursework Masters, or actively discourage them, the discipline has to structure its activities to fit with the students' lives, supervisors have to find ways to motivate students and keep them 'on track' in the face of extra demands and students find ways to work the system and get the funding, whilst juggling their various commitments. Shandy would concur with Paulina and is fervent in her support for the coursework option:

Ja so those are the kind of difficult things for me. So that we are landing up with students who are totally capable of being in a programme but cannot apply for a coursework programme because they don't get funding so they go into a full MA and they are not prepared so it means that as a supervisor you spend a lot more time it becomes quite erm you know also because we are supposed to have a minimum of 6 students each and 6 students when you are basically teaching full courses for each student erm according to their needs is erm a huge workload do I go back to my point that if they were put into coursework programmes it would also mediate a lot of the one on one time... (S l.162-169)

It would seem that whilst one response to poor skills at PhD level has seen the introduction of courses, this counter move to eliminate such at Masters level is remarkably short-sighted. In this context the driver behind the shift is primarily financial in that full thesis Masters students earn greater subsidy for the institution.

The other factor in this example is that whilst students are registered full time they are in reality part-time students. It is more difficult to support the students in ways that they need because of the curriculum restrictions. Students are more likely to take longer, drop out of the system and be lost which contradicts the need for more postgraduate students. If students don't complete their Masters they are not available then for PhDs and the whole has a knock on effect. Here Shandy also notes the effect of newly emergent structures in the form of policy on supervisors. Earlier we noted

that Paulina had indicated that supervisors might be reluctant to take on students who would skew their profiles. The policy mandating the minimum number of students an academic should supervise, whilst possibly intended to increase the postgraduate numbers, means that academics are scrambling to fulfil their so-called “requirements”. Thus they may well have to take on the weaker students or those not in their area of expertise. The effects of this still need to be calculated, particularly in terms of the possible unintended consequences.

The other aspect which Shandy raises is that many of their students become teachers, and the requirements within the education system for teachers can also affect the process. Again it is often financial considerations that influence the action of students:

We get a lot of part-time M.A students here a lot of people who are teaching who come back to do their MA and we really encourage them because they are usually funded by the schools they're at to do coursework M.As because of the time constraints as well– get M.As for promotion purposes... ..(S l.101-1-4)

So students work instrumentally with constraints and enablements to help them achieve their particular personal projects and interests. The institution however in these times of financial restriction has become much more focused on the funding considerations rather than on the needs of the staff or students. This signals a shift from disciplinary decision making, drawing on the expertise of the academics to institutional decision making which is clearly seen as market driven rather than educational.

The problem in higher education is generally the university gets more money for graduate students (S l.152-3)

So the activities at this level are substantially affected by financial considerations which shape what happens. Shandy however reiterates her strong support for a coursework approach to the Masters in the face of institutional opposition to the practice:

I know the university doesn't like coursework MAs because of the funding situation but I'm a firm believer in it. I have to say that the students whether they are sort of 75 cum laude students or whether they are 68 bordering MA students when they go through a coursework MA their work is always better (S l.95-99)

Here we can see several areas of contestation or contradiction emerging within this academic context. National needs to increase postgraduate enrolments, are affected by the government subsidies granted to different forms of enrolment at this level, as well as professional needs. Institutions, disciplines and supervisors may well find that their values and beliefs are challenged at different points. Since the discipline often attracts teachers who are coming back to do further study

the students are often part-time and working she sees the coursework as one way of supporting them given their time constraints and other issues. This would enable lifelong learning, and expand postgraduate numbers but other mechanisms work against this. The coursework provides them with structure, focused reading and guidance with their research, she clearly articulates the educational basis for her support of this particular curriculum. Thus by the time they have completed the coursework they have some theory and understanding of work being done in the area:

By the time it comes to writing the thesis they've got a whole body of reading behind them.. and writing and I think sometimes if people apply for a full MA you've got to go through that process anyway and it needs a lot more supervision time which is kind of strange because the university is saying we should spend less and less time with students and it's my experience that we are actually needing to spend more and more time with students.. (S I.115-121)

So mechanisms which thwart coursework are actively being put in place disregarding the needs of both students and supervisors:

We don't run a programme because we've been discouraged you know from the coursework although we do we've maintained our courses er in the MA programmes but you know in that should a student come in as a part time student or be able to pay for themselves and they wish to do it then we encourage them to do so (S I.272-275)

She regarded the system critically. The emphasis on numbers had a range of consequences and she is particularly critical of institutional moves which allow access for greater numbers of students yet do not allow for support of the kinds of students who are then in the system:

It's a difficult comment to make because I believe we should be pushing students into graduate study but I think the lowering of entry into graduate studies to things like 60 percent has had a huge impact on the capacity of students to cope erm and as a supervisor what it means is that you see students floundering and taking longer and longer to complete because they are just are struggling and however much help you give them they need a lot more hand holding so I mean not that's not necessarily a bad thing but it means that you are spending much longer with the student many more hours many more years sometimes... (S I.142-148)

She is clear about why and points to the financial gains that institutions receive for graduate students. Financial imperatives drive institutions. The tensions between good education and the financial imperatives, between the institutional drives and the student needs are highlighted in this and other interviews.

8.1.1.2.2 Exploring the student/ supervisor structure

Whilst the basic structure of supervision is a student and supervisor (sometimes in teams) focused on a research project and dissertation, the configuration of this and the activities themselves vary enormously between disciplines and across faculties. In the Human and Social Sciences the student often has the ability to decide on their own project, and to work on it, the design, implementation and writing up for themselves with some support from their supervisors. This was reflected by one or two of the respondents in this study. Paul is clear “..another characterisation as far as my practice is concerned is that I like very much students’ own choices of what they want to study as opposed to prescribing to them... I am not very much for projects where 10 students 11 students are doing almost the same study...” (P I. 119 – 130). Julia, Paulina and Shandy also indicated that their students choose their own projects. In general things differ in the Sciences but Priya in the medical sciences also indicated that her postgraduates decide on their own projects:

Currently I have 3 masters students that I am supervising 2 of whom are my registrars who are specialists in training and one is actually is a sub-specialist who is training for the specialist’s exam. He’s a consultant already.. and er of course being from a medical background the topics are medical related ...topics were selected by the candidates themselves although I had given them ideas but not directly chosen the topics for them.. (Pr I.8-15)

It would seem that there is some guidance in terms of area but the actual topic is left up to the student. For James, his students in the main, work with him on their own topics – he notes they must make their “own running”, they work away in the field – often in foreign countries. This means he must anticipate and prepare the students for a variety of contingencies. It is Tabitha and Tim who indicate a somewhat different role for their students. Science supervision is often structured around research projects which engage many students and Tim noted that having an active and productive research group was hard work for the researcher or supervisor concerned, something else that academics received very little training in. Whilst Tim and Tabitha’s students have their own research projects, those are nevertheless part of the whole broader initiative, becoming a research project within a research project. Tabitha outlined this:

...as far as I am concerned it is actually my project which I am sharing with them. That may sound selfish but actually the way it has evolved these are important aspects of the whole programme and the students then and I feel quite strongly.. that the student has an obligation as well.. and you know students must realize that it is quite a privilege to come into a successful research programme and be trusted you know with a particular aspect and so there it’s a two way thing. But they do have their own projects in that, you know as part of the whole (T&T I.176-182).

In order to have a project the supervisor also has to, in some cases, be conversant with project management which not all academics may be good at. Tim noted “ *doing science and managing science are two different activities they require different skills*” (T&T I. 189-190). This is not an aspect often dealt with in the literature on supervision and he notes that “*...having an active productive research group is hard work*” (T&T I 166). He indicated some staff were better at this than others. This was an additional aspect of the supervisory role in these disciplines and may affect individual performance in this regard. Tabitha is clear that the process is shaped by the needs of the kind of research activity in the sciences and this shows why the care of students is so complementary to their primary concern – the research:

Look in science you couldn't actually do what we do if you didn't have a team and look the university isn't going to provide us with 10 research posts so that we actually have a team, it would be wonderful but the thing is that's the way the sciences operate worldwide erm you know the supervisor's students are the hands in the lab. Hopefully they are also the brains but they are the brains that have been nurtured but that's the way it goes the way it is. We're not in the least bit different in this country (T&T I. 282-287).

In this picture it is clear that the process being followed is that familiar within science disciplines. It is part of the culture of science “ *...that's the way the sciences operate...We're not in the least bit different..*”. Thus the process and the culture is reproduced through the activities of these researchers. The knowledge relationship between supervisor and student varies here, with the power dynamics weighted in the supervisors favour. As Archer (2012) notes systems use the structures also to operate in unison to create and uphold cultures and norms. The research, postgraduate and academic spaces at this level in science are complementary and thus create a state of morphostasis.

8.1.1.2.3 The Working Student

Whilst much of the discussion about the calibre of student reflected on their weaknesses, there were instances where what students came with was more obviously enabling and provided important learning possibilities. Paulina is very aware that her students provide her with learning opportunities. In an applied discipline which often works with practitioners from the field, the students are often more mature and are current practitioners, bringing their workplace experience to bear on their studies, and structuring their research in relation to their experience and workplace conditions. Academics may be more or less familiar with these contexts which are now entering their domain. In Priya's case she is both practitioner and academic, this is not the case with Paulina. Nevertheless they share several aspects, and these issues are apparent in their tales. Paulina is

certain that it is this aspect of working with professional students which is central to her learning process:

I take [professionals] with a very high regard because there's a lot I learn from them. I guess the fact that I always look at them as people with more experience, there is always a lot that I learn from them that I didn't experience myself as a [professional] because perhaps I was a [professional] for just 3 years in a different context so I always value their input. That's why I always invite them to talk about their experiences [in the profession]. In most cases those would be experiences that have led them to be doing the kind of research that they are doing and of course once you have established the kind of personal relationship that I spoke about earlier.... . (Pa l.117- 127)

This maintaining a connection with the workplace is seen as important – it is an additional aspect of professional identity – that of academic and practitioner which not all academics have to accommodate but which adds to the complexity of the academic identity. What is picked up here is also reflective of other experiences noted in the literature (Robinson, 2011). One way of maintaining this contact for those not actively practicing, as with Paulina, is through students who are practitioners, often inverting the role of expert and learner. The control of the academic knowledge, the processes and procedures rests with the academic who maintains a gatekeeping position in relation to the certification, whilst the candidate has practical and application knowledge and often of contextual nuances that the academic may not have.

Contributing to academic identity and confidence is the ability to draw on disciplinary and academic knowledge in order to claim the expert arena. This is particularly the case in the traditional supervision structure, with the expert supervisor who is supposedly at the cutting edge of research. The notion of teachers (supervisors) who are older and wiser (the sages) teaching younger less experienced and knowledgeable students (the acolytes) is firmly entrenched in education institutions. Where this becomes inverted, as in Paulina's case, the norms are challenged, confidence may be diminished and it is to this issue that Paulina returns during the interview:

I find it difficult to separate the professional and the personal at erm the dealing with different personalities for me somehow that builds towards my own erm profile in terms of, how do I then deal with a personality like this. For example, I had one of my students was very senior ja and she initially I could see that she was feeling uncomfortable with me supervising her and I think it probably had to do with the manner I spoke to her. And she probably felt this person is younger than my daughters or she's as young as my own daughters and so it it was a bit not problematic per se but erm I knew that I had to be cautious. ... once I overcame that hurdle of being able to speak with her and tell her where she's going wrong without offending her considering the fact that she erm slightly mature. So once I had developed that then I felt I am confident to take on

and to deal with similar issues or just different people with different personalities and people with different ages.... (Pa l.148-160)

These inversions may create problems for the students, making their ability to listen to their supervisors more difficult, affecting their attitudes, and so Paulina indicates how important it is to be sensitive and aware of this so that it can be dealt with:

...these people they are mostly [professionals] so they've been in the field and they know what they are doing or think that they know what they are doing and they do know what they are doing except they need a bit of assistance in the regard of developing a dissertation and doing research generally... so and its that little experience that I have always found not difficult per se but I know that is something I have to think about and be careful... (Pa l. 94-100)

When supervisors manage to negotiate these aspects there is a growing sense of confidence and satisfaction which consolidates their identity both as academic and practitioner.

8.1.2 Departmental and Disciplinary Influences on Supervising

The primary context within which supervisors operate is that of their discipline and department, then that of the faculty or school, college and institution (Becher & Trowler, 2001). These structures and the way they intermesh are powerful contextual mechanisms. In some instances it was clear that the department and the way it was had important effects for the process. In Paul's instance his structural environment positioned him in particular ways. Given the size and shape of the discipline in this institution, his hope for an opportunity to work with seniors and professors developmentally was short lived. As a new specialism there were few staff and a lack of senior staff members. All staff in the grouping were under pressure and he faced the constraint of an immediate workload:

I found that there were students waiting, not only were they waiting for supervision, but I was also immediately supposed to do some examination of of dissertations ... (sic). (P l. 8-11)

Working in an emerging field puts additional pressure on individuals because generally for such processes there is a lack of structure in the form of resources either human or material. Having made a choice to enter the institution, the post that he took up carried with it the history of the institution, of the field in this particular faculty or school, as well as being embedded in a national and international context. In this structural reality the field or specialisation within the discipline was still seeking to establish itself as a separate learning area in this school and the consequences of this are clear – a pressure to offer courses to students at all levels (undergraduate and graduate) and the need to cover all aspects, teaching, supervising and examining, whilst perhaps the staff complement is quite small, has particular consequences, most especially that individuals are left to

juggle their responsibilities. The strong interaction between the level of the Real and effects at the level of the Actual are closely related as he indicates in a specific example:

... see the set up in in this institution is that you actually have an internal examiner for dissertations and the internal is often somebody that has knowledge in that particular subject area and what I have found was that there are not many of them and therefore we had to circulate among ourselves. If I supervise a student then my colleague would have to be the internal examiner and it would have to circulate like that so I was not spared from that kind of experience. I remember after joining... in addition to supervising my own students at the end of that year I had to do some examining of a colleague's student . (P 1.17-24)

This is one aspect of the capacity issue – one capacity aspect (small staff complement) constraining another (availability of qualified examiners internally). It is not just about the supervision but rather the building of a coterie of academics who can service the specialisation. Such areas, like this one which is a growing area, need time and space to develop in a range of ways. Current climates within higher education may not make allowance for this, increasing inflexible pressures on practitioners.

Paulina indicated a similar situation. Within the broader discipline, the area of specialisation that Paulina was in was relatively new although growing. This was both within the institution but also perhaps nationally, as she indicates. There were a limited number of colleagues working in the specialisation and this was reflected in some of the constraints that she faced when choosing examiners:

Yes you don't get told which examiner is going to examine your students' work you give suggestions and sometimes you give only two suggestions and you know that it can only be one or two people or those people ... from my own observation not experience I haven't experienced difficulty in identifying examiners yet I guess because I have only so far supervised about 3 students but I have observed that at some point it becomes problematic you have to move outside the circle of examiners that you have used before and you have to look beyond look for new people and I think erm at that point it becomes a little bit erm problematic .. it goes back to the issues of to the question of networking as a supervisor how well networked you are... (Pa 1.335-343)

She also recognises that in such a constrained environment it is about how well you work with others since there maybe those who would be reluctant or refuse to examine. This could cause problems for individual supervisors later. Thus such structural aspects may be particular to an institution, but they may be inter-institutional as well. Here she intimates that the discipline itself may be still emergent and that the constraints stretch beyond the institution. This may be further constrained by institutional or national decisions about

examiners, levels of qualification and other elements which remove decision making from the hands of the discipline and academics.

A different set of circumstances related to the discipline occurs in the situation in which Priya was located. In this discipline the students are practitioners, who are very focused on their professional practice. This shows in the limited postgraduate engagement in this area over the years as students leave to take up their practice. A number of quite specific mechanisms create the learning environment. With a vocational focus, postgraduate students, who are practicing professionals, have other work demands, and especially as medical registrars they are working their way through a large number of different departments and areas in hospitals to consolidate their earlier training. Often academic staff also work both in academia and in the profession. Thus Priya indicates the limited time they have to engage in the research project itself especially in the more pressured medical environment, thus students require continual encouragement “... also I motivate them to stimulate them to continue all the time..” (Pr I.110). Her recognition of the realities of supervising working candidates “ ...sometimes our working hours are different and then we see as medics you can’t say they [must] do it specifically at that time... many a time when we do set up a meeting then many a time I’ve got something or the candidate got something...” (Pr I.100-103) means that she is seeking strategies to accommodate these elements as well as the supervision demands, something supervisors in other disciplines may not have to contend with. There are clear tensions between different elements within the students’ lives, but this also reflects again a system premised on particular kinds of students (traditional, full time) which these postgraduate students are not and which their own curriculum does not support well.

With these constraints of time and practical work issues, the projects themselves and the kind of research the students do may be limited in such disciplines. The size of the dissertation may need to be contained. If this is the case, that this is a mini project at Masters level, supervisors need to know what activities are feasible and appropriate – Priya noted the issues for the supervisors:

We are quite limited in the fact that actual research itself must be done within two weeks because they need to study for exams so time is a constraint in terms of what research is done and most of them are like audit based where they just look at a retrospective review of er charts or just interview patients or an assessment of the patient when they leave the clinic so those are the kinds of skills.. (Pr I.155-159)

This is very different from other disciplines and faculties. It implies different project skills, different kind of writing and of effort involved. It may also limit the kind of learning that

occurs at this level in terms of developing research skills, which can impact on later levels. Certainly differences between the humanities and the sciences in terms of project size, dissertation style and writing are acknowledged in the literature (Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 1997; Parry, Atkinson, & Delamont, 1994; Wright & Cochrane, 2000). Whilst Shandy indicated these kinds of differences in her discipline indicating that “*you are also supervising an artistic process or a reflection on a process*” (S I 50), Priya acknowledged the very different structure in the medical school but did not elaborate much on this as it affects postgraduate supervision.

These structural differences at the level of the Real which relate to the discipline or department have significant effects on the process and how the participants experience it. The difference between process, product and learning environment may all be affected by what is being focused on and the way things are done. This may lead to newly emergent forms, or to the demise of certain practices. For Shandy, given the performance nature of her discipline, there has been a long struggle with what is valued in the academic context in terms of artefact. Generally, the system values and rewards publications, and dissertations. The performing arts disciplines have found themselves pitted against both structural and cultural mechanisms within academia. For academics in the performing arts the performance, and the creative output have been the elements they would argue for and they have struggled for recognition of these forms within academia. This affects both the productivity of the individual academic (in terms of what is ‘counted’) and what students are expected to produce in their studies:

The worst thing you know ...if I make a 40 minute work which would be considered a full length work that would be 3 months working every day erm whereas you write an article and its .. kind of equitable but you know our DOHET¹¹ systems you get sort of this many points... (J I.354-357)

Working to introduce new forms of artefact as the postgraduate output is a proactive process in order to extend the parameters of the discipline and one Shandy indicates she has been involved in. This has implications for supervision and the way that is handled, enabling emergent practices. She comments on what that may mean for supervisors in their practice, in terms of finding and retaining students in this discipline:

¹¹ Department of Higher Education and Training which is the ministry responsible for Higher Education

Our new praxis MA which is for example just talking about that which has been a very particular way of encouraging performance practitioners to come in and do higher graduate study so we don't just lose them because they want to be going off to make work. That we actually retain them. The supervision is also then to work artistically with them as well as to be able to mentor them in their writing or [activity 1] or [activity 2¹²] whatever they choose to do. So it's quite exciting because often you are working with quite intrepid [discipline] minds ... so the kind of the challenge for a supervisor in those situations is to create the work that they want but to be the person that they can reflect back on so that the thing that they might .. need assistance around is really the theory how do you mediate the process which is quite an exciting... (S l.238-248)

The processes in disciplines are often affected by the status and standing of the discipline within institutions and the type of courses offered, and the size of the departments and their standing in institutions. In this instance the practical nature influences the environment quite considerably and the mechanisms, both structural and cultural are tightly inter-wound and have been portrayed as consistent:

Because our discipline is generally one where people go into the field or they become teachers they go and do the praxis so we've always had quite small numbers of MA students because they've wanted to go out and make [performance] work or work in development ... (S l. 42-45)

She highlights the effect that this new form in postgraduate study has on the supervision process. This particular discipline, in the current modern context is also under pressure, particularly as an art, and a performing process at that. There is less funding available for the discipline, for research in the discipline and possibly less obvious job opportunities in the area and therefore it becomes more difficult to attract students, although it is still a teaching subject in schools for now. This obviously affects the intake at postgraduate level. Thus mechanisms spanning different systems, education and professional, intersect to influence the process. Most departments then, even where they consist of two or three performing arts amalgamated, are often small – with few members of staff. New pressures increase the staffing problem “*Yeah obviously depending on what our expertise is as our staff dwindles the expertise dwindles as well*” (S l. 259-60). That this is not only an institutional issue was mirrored in Shandy's reflections on the national situation

we have at present 2 PhD students erm its quite difficult because in [discipline] studies I think in the country there are 4 academics working in higher institutions

¹² Terms in square brackets replace aspects which would encroach on anonymity and confidentiality. She referred to quite specific activities which were revealing

have PhDs the discipline as I said before it's a discipline where sometimes practitioners come into the discipline later in their lives or upgrade their academic qualifications ... I think when people have done an MA honours stream they want to go out and make [discipline] and make work ...so we've never really attracted you know that high level of PhD students because I think if you're going to do [discipline] studies and do a PhD you're heading for an academic route (S I.280-288)

In rounding up this discussion she highlighted issues that face many in professional disciplines:

I'm not sure that many {discipline} people want to go and land up in an academic route so the discipline also doesn't allow I suppose... yeah if I mean if you are wanting to be making [discipline] ... you don't want to be sitting around writing a PhD... (S I.290-293)

Thus disciplinary and departmental sizes and contexts again affect the practice of staff, and supervisors in particular disciplines, as does the broader societal context. Mechanisms operating at different levels intersect to affect individual practice. Shandy's passion and identification with her discipline is very obvious through her interview, as is her understanding of the challenges facing the discipline and the students. Since this discipline was one in which doing a PhD was not seen as useful in the professional field few went that far, this means that often the academic themselves might not have these higher qualifications and are playing catch up. They need, rather than a practice-based or professional bias now to develop, in short order, a research culture within the discipline. Thus currently they are placed on the back foot in relation to some other practice-based disciplines.

Julia reflects on the role of the department in enabling or constraining the individual, although her peripheral positioning outside of disciplinary structures may contribute strongly to her perceptions. She indicates the size of the department has implications:

I don't know in big departments like psychology and politics they have so many postgraduate students that they actually automatically form a group of people supervising a group of students and you have the support then which you don't have in a small department or in a department where the fields are so different that you actually can't share content... (Ja I. 35-39)

From her perspective the structural elements of size, placement and ethos of departments are important in the process. Support systems which are created through collegial interaction are important. Just as the contexts that students operate within affect the process, so the position of the supervisor can enable or constrain the process in a range of ways, and Julia is aware of this:

If you are in a department where there are many of these being done with other supervisors that you work with regularly it might be easier but because I'm not quite in the department all the time I felt quite isolated I still do in this situation for instance I don't know when we reach year 3 or 4 of this at what stage do we appoint examiners or externals you know all those things I would like someone to give me a piece of paper.. (Ja I.100 -104)

Access to a range of resources and opportunities is limited by peripheral placement. This places Julia in the position of Primary agent, largely disempowered (Motshoane & McKenna, 2014) aggravated by being outside the discipline. Such positioning often increases feelings of insecurity, lack of confidence and impedes development, which in turn exacerbates what new supervisors generally feel when starting out.

8.1.2.1 Administrative Structures

There are a variety of administrative structures which work as mechanisms to enable or constrain supervision. Several respondents noted how these affected their practice. There were a number of structures that could enable Julia in the process which she commented on, such as the various school committees. Equally, they could also be a constraint for her or others depending on the process. Julia reflected on how things also change in this regard. Such changes can heighten feelings of vulnerability for a supervisor since it limits how far they can draw upon their own prior experience or provide support. She notes therefore, how the committees such as the higher degrees can provide a level of protection for the student and the supervisor:

I think we've just been through the process of getting everything approved the proposal the ethical clearance and everything I was totally astounded by the level of detail that is required at this level at this stage or that has changed dramatically since the days when I did a PhD where you had to think up a topic and get going or I mean this was a twenty page document and I was really unprepared for the level of detail and it had to be referred back to us from their school the school higher degrees quite rightly so. I'm grateful for that protection we got from the school before it was submitted it was eventually approved with real good comments very positively so it gave me a bit of encouragement (Ja I.27-33)

However despite the enabling role of the committees and their feedback which may vary across contexts, she is equally aware of the constraints such as the lack of information and communication impose on her new role.

I immediately have to say that faculty and faculty office really needs to provide new supervisors with a whole set of guidelines you have no idea I had no idea I had to find out everything the long and the hard way by getting a notice 'you have to submit this piece of paper as well' 'OK and where do I find the piece of

paper how does it happen' erm and I find that frustrating er it's also not fair on the student and I've asked around 'is there a manual' a guideline a pamphlet erm for postgraduate supervision and there doesn't seem to be one so I would really like faculty to develop something like that.. (Ja I.73-79)

The inefficiencies of the process are frustrating and are a real constraint for both student and supervisor – there are many new structures that have been instituted in recent years such as the development of the postgraduate office and the posts of deans of postgraduate study and much depends on how these structures operate and who takes up those roles. Once again the individual may be thrown back onto their own resources:

Every normal academic school has got a higher degrees a higher degrees committee that would vet all proposals for that school and that is before they go to the higher degrees of the faculty. The postgraduate office of the faculty is under the deputy dean of postgraduate studies... and in that office they administer these things it's just I'm not sure that information from that office always gets down here and I also hear that information from here disappears into that office. I was informed by the other supervisors to make copies of everything and tape them ... (Ja I.142-149)

Thus such structures, whilst they have the potential to enable activity, can also constrain the process, slow it down, demotivate and generally frustrate depending on how they work. Having noted the usefulness of the higher degrees committee she also notes the negative effects they may have:

I do get that support from the co-supervisor which is brilliant but from faculty higher degrees you get demands not support erm and you don't get feedback. Things get submitted and you hear nothing. The student got informed that she got her ethical clearance done but I didn't get informed er which I thought was a bit of an omission (Ja I. 111-114)

Existing structures might have the potential to provide support but often have not yet expanded into that role and thus support has not emerged at this point as Paulina identifies:

... there isn't any feedback from the higher degrees back to the supervisor there isn't anything like that and I think that could help us supervisors improve tremendously because then you know that this is what was done wrong and then you know that you can avoid it next time or you know this is what I need to improve on. So that sort of thing would help tremendously... I remember just things like meetings where we would be discussing the progress of students but not necessarily any constructive feedback to the supervisor to say this is what is happening and this how this could be improved... (Pa I.231-239)

She feels that even the school meetings in which student progress is discussed do not seem to offer much. In reflection she noted how far she had been unaware of choices that she as a supervisor had had but which she now recognises:

It's about choice you know, what whether I've always been surprised when I've been to other meetings and I hear other people say well I was asked to supervise and I refused and for a long time I didn't know that you can refuse to supervise or you can refuse to mark or to examine a student. (Pa l. 366-372)

In this the tension between individual options and the constraints they face within a system is highlighted. It is possible that new supervisors end up supervising students they might not otherwise have taken on had they understood their choices and the full ramifications for themselves. Like others her first supervision is of a student who had been in the system for far too long :

whether you choose to supervise students within your own area whether you choose to supervise students who you know are going to finish erm in other words if you taught in the coursework you sort of know which are most likely to finish and if you know they are slow there are those who progress rather slowly compared to others and you don't want to be involved with them... I've never been asked whether I want to supervise a student I mean they have always been imposed on me and I didn't know that I could say no. (Pa l.373-380)

This is important since it may constrain other academic activities such as research or publication because of the time needed to work with the student. In the current climate this would adversely affect the way individual academics are judged. The time to completion would also indicate negatively for both student and supervisor. However, she quickly points out the effects on students if it is possible to refuse students, especially pertinent in the current climate of redress and development and clearly indicating her values and commitment to students:

if I mean if we know that a student is problematic in terms of progress in terms of their learning capabilities and stuff like that and you know that working with a particular student is going to be a lot of work you know every supervisor would naturally not want to have that kind of responsibility. But I think it is a disservice to the student because the student would have to be supervised by somebody so I don't know whether I am saying that supervisors have to have a lot more to say in who they want to supervise but I think if that's what I am saying it leaves a problem for those other students that nobody would want to supervise but they have to be supervised so I think at some point there has to be it also goes back to issues of workloads and stuff... (Pa l. 383-391)

This highlights the tension or contradiction between the needs of the institution (translated onto the supervisor through performance demands) and the needs of the students.

Shandy highlighted structures such as different committees that might provide useful feedback which could be used for learning. This was a point that she reiterated during the tale. She indicated for instance that getting positive feedback which contributes to learning is dependent upon those who sit on the higher degrees committee:

...our higher degrees committee is really generous and what happens is ...I'm sure it is the same supervisor and student go up and present their proposal to the little committee and erm this year I have had two students go and do that and it it's been a very lovely experience there were quite harsh notes given but given in quite a growing capacity like that because these things can be terribly aggressive and I think again, being a little bit ungenerous, but often academics get very onerous of their areas and rather than assist the student they become a little pompous in the notes that they give and I have found I have to say this last process to be extremely nurturing of the student and you know both of the students walked out with corrections and with things they needed to look at but erm quite you know quite uplifted by the process (sic) (S I. 181-189)

The notes and comments provide opportunities for both student and supervisor to learn. As supervisors work through their practice newly emergent supervision strategies develop. Nevertheless, it was only through thoughtful engagement with these that the individual would learn, again a personal choice to make it a learning process.

8.1.3. Confronting the Higher Education Environment

Mechanisms at institutional level, national and international level certainly had an effect on individual practices. The range of policies and practices within an institution, even though perhaps not solely focused on the postgraduate sector, nevertheless, has an influence. Each of the interviewees indicated these in a variety of ways

8.1.3.1 Policy Mechanisms

Over the past ten years there has been a plethora of policies within the institution, and several of the respondents made reference to these mechanisms and how they were affecting their practice. Many of these were in response to structural mechanisms in the form of the coming institutional and programme audits planned by the HEQC under the auspices of the CHE, and in the longer term in response to the whole emerging national and international climate of managerialism and control which is thinly disguised by the discourses of 'quality', 'audit', 'accountability' and 'efficiency'. The push is for compliance. Maguire (2011) noting that quality is a technology of leadership which is central to the neoliberal, managerial ideology effecting power dynamics and oppression, claims it affects conditions of labour, individual status and survival:

What it (increased attention to teaching) has resulted in is a polarising of the components of academic labour with groups of academics and groups of institutions focused more explicitly on research or teaching and associated duties of academic citizenship and pastoral support of students. This is particularly highlighted by the burden of administration which is allocated often inequitably between academic staff and which some studies put as having increased threefold between the 1960s and 1990s (Cownie 2004: 85) (Maguire, 2011 p. 131)

Certainly, the respondents noted similar trends within their environments. Policies such as the promulgation of Senate norms for productivity, the allocation of units or points (PUs) which individuals are expected to achieve (often through processes not fully under their control), expectations of numbers of postgraduate students per staff member, the discourse of productivity which is attached to this, and the implementation of a performance management system designed to manage “talent” have been introduced. New requirements for the spelling out of workloads through the use of formula have emerged, and the personal drive by the Vice Chancellor to ensure all staff members attain a Doctorate has become primary. This has been strengthened by the continual and very public pursuance of a position in international ranking tables regardless. This aggressive drive is also related to the taking on of the mantle of “Research” university. The effects were reflected through the interviews in various ways. This sees a shift of decision making and power from the academic groupings to the institutional centre. These mechanisms then reconfigure academic spaces, affecting the ethos and culture and impacting on practice at all levels.

The more experienced academics noted the trends, and whilst lamenting them, nevertheless certainly indicated that they were less affected given that they were, or were likely soon to be, only tangentially connected to the institution. They show the tension, particularly with the more experienced, with ideas of academic freedom and autonomy. In this way and given their position as senior, research active individuals, they belong to a more powerful group within the institution, now part of a corporate agency. Thus James and Tabitha and Tim indicated this positioning. Being thus positioned it also gives a degree of leverage and clear space for personal agency to be exercised which may be unavailable for new staff.

James is very clear about his response to the mechanisms of increasing control. He classifies himself as a “very independent sort of person” comparing himself to a *‘new testament person rather than an old testament one’*. It was clear that he found rules and regulations generally irritating and often

constraining especially where they affected his practice or his students reflecting Maguire's points, and his emergent practice as he espoused it was in some ways finding a way around these:

I find rules and regulation extremely irritating most of the time and sometimes I just think they make no sense at all... so I continually find myself clashing with rules and regulation and I'm one of the things I do well is get around regulations erm ones that I don't feel are worth abiding by so yeah a common challenge is 'hmm we've got a problem here the rule says this now how can we get around that?' erm as I said I've become quite good at it and I'm also quite good at just ignoring things and most of the time I get away with that too because either the system doesn't catch up with me or because there is no sort of checking up procedure or if I am found out erm no one is going to do .. they don't think it's worth tackling me.. (J1 I. 98-105)

This reflection on his own ways of operating in response to the structural aspect shows a strong sense of agency related to his own agendas rather than that of the discipline or institution. His actions constitute points of resistance. Clearly he has a strong personal moral compass, although left unwatched these could have negative consequences of which he is aware:

I don't use that for personal gain I use it to help students to get through the system and so on erm the problem is that it can be used for personal gain and abuse of power and stuff like that and er and what's happening in this faculty at the moment as of this year... well its more its wider than that its university wide is a real tightening up of issues to do with ethical clearance and the examination of dissertations and theses which is costing me a very very large amount of extra work. Whereas I just would have in the past organised the whole examination process myself and er sent out the stuff and er got the reports back and so on and made decisions now I've got to go through the fac... a very very nit picky faculty procedure which is no doubt going to give fairer results. The chances of interfering with the results is erm much less than they used to be not that I think I every used those opportunities but they certainly cost a great deal more in terms of time and they lengthen the examination process (J 11.107- 116)

He outlines the institutional changes, and their immediate triggers, through his examples. The tension between individual practice, initiative and the system is clearly evidenced through this individual's narrative. He puts this down to two things which provoke reactions and resistance, those being the large number of students he supervises and his professed independence which embraces an abhorrence for rules.

He elaborates on his reaction to regulation through the example of the mechanism of new ethical clearance regulations and he clearly locates this within the neoliberal frame through the discourse of "industry" he engages:

I don't think they are really worth doing erm yeah I've had a recent clash with an administrator clash is too strong a word a difference of opinion and she's an

administrator who looks after our ethical clearance. Now it's only recently that the ethical clearance industry has sort of been seriously what's the word taken seriously and so I've had a number of students who in the past and sometimes four or five years ago one in particular whose done all the data collecting it's all been done now the implication is 'well this student should have got informed consent from a large number of people who he interviewed in Indonesia' I might say and four or five years ago and 'what are we going to do about this' well I mean my view is well its quite simple 'we are going to say bad luck -- next time we'll get informed consent for this student erm it's totally irrelevant let's live with that let's not worry about it' it should take less than five seconds to make that sort of decision... (J1 l. 120-129)

The effect of such formal processes is that the ethical process tends to become an exercise in compliance rather than an engaged task, and that people are put off by the constraints. This contributes also, to the increasing levels of bureaucracy, often serving to slow the process down and it becomes a cost to the supervisor and possibly the student as well.

It is certainly an irritant erm and it's it's what's the word it's certainly a disincentive to take on ... more because of the additional work that's being expected and whilst I see the general logic behind it I unfortunately think it is being operated in a very legalistic fashion a one size fits all fashion and erm one size fits all doesn't fit all that's all there is to it ... I think a bit more common sense in the application of those procedures.. (J 1 l.132-136)

Priya also finds these processes difficult. Whilst ethics may be most essential in the medical sciences the process of getting clearance, nevertheless, certainly affects supervision. No project may begin until clearance has been granted. There are structures in place to ensure this. The need to follow very particular protocols is strictly enforced in the medical sciences and is exacerbated by other requirements. The ethics process in medical research is more stringent than in disciplines which are more text-based, social in nature or dealing with non-human materials. It is more complex and requires more stages than some other disciplines and given the time it may take it can constrain activities for these projects. Whilst Priya does not make this explicit, this of course impacts on time to completion. She uses the example of one of her students:

You see when we are doing a study involving patients, hospital patients, then we need hospital approval from the department of health .. the delay was with the postgraduate committee. One of the problems we have here is in getting the approval. I don't know if it's in the other faculties but in the medical faculty it can take a year to 18 months to get full ethical clearance although the ethics itself is not such a long time.. the problem here is with the postgraduate approval and on inquiry on why it takes so long we are told we don't have enough reviewers to review the protocol or experts in the field to review the protocol and those that we do have the few that we do have are always busy.. (Pr l.25-33)

If student projects are structured by these various limitations such as time for the study, the ethical aspects and funding it may be that what is chosen for study, and how it is studied, may be or become quite circumscribed. The system itself is beginning to impose a 'one size fits all' mentality – or rather a homogenising of practice, one which interferes with the process. The effect is to slow down a process which is under pressure to be completed in minimum time. The contradiction here is obvious. The response of academics to the new impositions is also becoming clear. Activities which do not count for performance or towards productivity are being gradually squeezed out, fewer are willing to undertake tasks such as examining or reviewing ethics forms since they take up inordinate amounts of time but count for little.

Julia concurs articulating several reservations with the process. The structural effects are noted, and some of the possible negative or even unintended consequences outlined. Thus some structures put in place to minimise 'risk' may engender the very dishonesty – finishing students work for them – that they are intended to limit. She sees that the effect of many of the policies has been a rather perfunctory compliance which runs counter to the educational aspects

I think they've become quite mechanical almost especially the ethical clearance thing which has become so over the top where I don't think ethical clearance is at all necessary for one person to talk to another one er its now become the norm if you talk to another person you have to have ethical clearance er and I think its daft frankly but of course plagiarism has been around when I was a student a professor was caught out with a cheat PhD it was a huge thing and he lost his job but its easier now...(Ja I.268-272)

James finds such bureaucracy is annoying and given a lack of time finds various ways to circumvent the process, indicating that his current status affords him some protection. Not only formal ethics paperwork which is one form of control, but the growing insistence related to so-called quality checks that all courses should be evaluated is restraining:

I'm not a person I'm not into evaluating my own I don't have time to evaluate my own performance very well and that includes giving out questionnaires to students tell me what you think of me (laugh) having reached professorial rank I don't I need to that's part of it I think I know I'm doing a decent job so I'm not going to bother hearing people telling me that I'm good but what I often do is say if you think this could be improved please tell me and often just give them a blank sheet and say in two or three sentences just tell me what you think could be improved its thrown up a few good things... (J2 I.392-399)

This is not just resistance for resistance sake, but that he sees specific reasons why the lack of flexibility is problematic, in particular because of the variety of students and of topics and methodologies. The system he found was not "kind" and in reflecting on the changing nature of the

system he indicated how recent events in his own faculty had contributed to the increasing bureaucracy. Scandals around senior staff and around nepotism in awarding of degrees, and the obtaining of questionable degrees in some faculties had led to much greater scrutiny and allowed greater institutional intervention in faculty affairs than there had been previously. That this was a reflection of a growing legalistic and bureaucratic process internationally was not mentioned. It was noted that “ *the outcome is that it is a much less free system for the rest of us for that reason and I don’t sort of I don’t begrudge the system I just think it’s used in a sort of unthinking uncaring sort of way it just makes life more complex and difficult.. than it used to be..*” (J1 l.220-222)

The rise within the Higher Education sector of mechanisms related to fraud (there are now regular workshops conducted for staff on fraud), increasing legal procedures, and the emergence of the discourse of “risk management” more suited to the insurance industry has been notable in the last four to five years. Growing mechanisms of surveillance and assessment are emerging. This has coincided with an alarming increase in levels of court cases involving staff and the institution. This deepens the divide between staff and management, but also reflects the culture of blame and criminalisation of staff and students that is strongly emergent (Baatjes, 2005; Churchman & King, 2009; Colson, 2014; Molesworth et al., 2009; Nixon, 2001).

It becomes clear through the tale that James has come to recognise the costs of certain activities in relation to the bigger picture – in making choices around these he prioritises in relation to his own concerns:

I think another factor too is simply the erm the amount of work that I do I mean I don’t have time to spend holding people’s hands as I once did thinking back to the mid 80s because I’m quite a productive researcher so I’m thinking to myself why isn’t everyone a productive researcher what’s this I’m too busy to do research I’ve got plenty of time to do research and erm but maybe those people have reached a point that I reached a few years ago saying I’ve got no time to do research erm and its extremely difficult to get any decent space of time meaning a few hours to focus on one task is just so many things bombarding you one after the other erm so I think that’s another element that I don’t have the time to spend doing what I er I used to .. (J2 l.76-84)

He recognises that the time and care taken in teaching impacted on being able to pursue and write up his research for which one needs time. The choice is towards limiting the teaching and to a certain extent his supervision.

He is quick to point out that this has emerged from his own process not enforced through policy. He rather points to the limitations of policy in respect of guidance on how to work with students.

It's not something I got out of a policy document about ways of operating .. I think a lot of those policies I accept that they are useful they give people something to do who write them and if you are not confident you can go to them and perhaps learn stuff but I think my where I've come to now it's been largely a matter of personal experience... (J2 I.377-381)

Issues of quality are raised however in relation to numbers:

I've got other people who look at me and say how on earth can you supervise that many students and I agree it's far too big a load but I think they've got a supervisory style which is much more hands on much more considered I think and in some cases much more irritating to the students who want to get this wretched thesis or dissertation out of the road and here's this supervisor taking weeks to read it... (J2 I.429-434)

Here he indicates how supervision style may emerge in response to the context and conditions within which one works, but also in response to personal projects and concerns. Approaches are as much a reflection of individual values as they are contextually shaped. Like several other respondents the importance of the educational aspect of supervising is reiterated. He indicates how the process contributes to his learning and keeping updated – also the rejuvenation and energising aspects.

Tabitha and Tim have similar responses to the policy context. They assert their own judgement and independence in making decisions. The two supervisors acknowledged the increasing pressure in particular in terms of time, both for the student and for the supervisor. The greatest pressure arises out of the push for minimum time to completion, driven by the national and international trends. Thus mechanisms work across a variety of levels. However they were adamant about facilitating a learning process for the student and it was clear that they embraced a more developmental approach and were resistant to pressure towards an instrumentalist approach:

...there's no way I would want to rush a student through just for the sake they should get a degree and in two years or three years or whatever it is (T&T I. 235-6).

The effects of these pressures on the process are described in a way which is balanced, recognising the varied impact they can have. However the effect on innovation and creativity is made explicit:

... in some ways I think there are I think there is more pressure from funders, there's more pressure from bureaucrats ... and this is not necessarily a bad thing

it's just a recognition that there's erm there's more pressure to be organized and to walk down the well-trodden path there is less room for 'oh that's fun why don't we go and look at that' and just that almost intellectual freedom (T&T I.242-246).

Once again the issue of 'fun' and a more serendipitous approach is raised. In some ways this highlights a key contradiction that emerges in the evolving higher education environment. The drive for more postgraduate qualifications based on the assumption that these will then contribute to greater innovation which will underpin a vibrant and growing economy is countered by the process which is being put in place (Barnett, 2012; Molesworth et al., 2009). Essentially the system may not produce those who can be innovative. Greater bureaucracy, higher levels of control and surveillance and a productivity, or production-line mentality contribute greatly to the stifling of innovation and creativity. A kind of conformity “..to walk down the well-trodden path” is being encouraged, essentially a kind of mediocrity, highlighting a deep contradiction to the more messy and uncertain process that often accompanies innovation.

Individuals are confronted by the structures, many of which are emergent. These were acknowledged by all the supervisors interviewed. Tabitha and Tim note these with Tim indicating:

Tim: *We are getting more and more and more weighted down with bureaucracy and in some way strained. It's almost like doing stuff by numbers, paint by numbers, research by numbers.. I sometimes find the university has two sets of standards in a way really or maybe it's not two sets of standards but its sometimes speaks with two voices in that it supposedly wishes to encourage postgraduate studies but at its same time does everything in its power to prevent supervisors from having enough time to do their job properly. Certainly running this place is much more .. being involved and working here is much more complex than it was twenty years ago...*

Tab: *I am quite glad I am not permanent staff because of the bureaucracy there and the load, the new rules and this and that and that. Thank goodness I am outside of that... (T&T I.531-545).*

The effect of this change is that supervisors become bogged down in dealing with the ever increasing rules, policies and regulation and that in turn encourages performance by rote. Such compliance mentality is seen as encroaching on academic freedom and this offers an obvious challenge to their values and beliefs:

There's been a loss of that academic freedom... the loss of what universities are all about it is about one's attitude how we inter-relate with the institution in the activities of dealing with the students...If you look at the definition of a university universities are not universities any more... they are not universities any more now machine production factories which is an awful shame (T&T I.552-586).

There was clear recognition however, that broader forces were driving changes within their own context, of mechanisms working across levels. There may even have been a slight sense of harkening back to a more “golden age” as Lea and Stierer suggests (Lea & Stierer, 2011).

Tab ...there's been a loss of that academic freedom is the word I am using but I am not using it in the conventional sense the loss of what are universities all about ..I don't think we are alone in all this bureaucracy..

Tim: No we're not

Tab: I remember when we went into one of the programmes.. talking to someone in the UK... he said we had to go through it and so forth we are just trotting along with the world trend... (T&T 552-577)

Students are requiring more engagement in the form of monitoring and pushing, which is seen as frustrating and as part of the changing environment. It seemed that there is pressure to become more structured which it was acknowledged had benefits but could be more demanding. It also challenged the style that some supervisors like Tim feel more inclined towards, a more “relaxed” approach, one which is confirmed by Tabitha in an interchange:

I sometimes think I should be more organized and I am sometimes glad I am not

Tab: you are actually quite organized

Tim: No organized in terms of regular get togethers with the students making sure that everything is on track but I'm also I like to develop two things in a student One of them is an almost not quite a laissez faire attitude .. relaxed (T&T I. 634-640).

Theo noting the effect of this on the new academic was interesting, this pressure and meeting the numbers evoked this response in the face of grappling with weaker students:

It just one minor cry for help...ja I've done my job I've produced the numbers that they want so whatever happens to those student ja so... (T I. 310-315)

This is a cost which the structures can exacerbate by making the limitations much greater, tighter time frames put pressure on individuals in the system. Both supervisors and students feel this. These limitations are introduced despite much research and experience showing that students generally don't complete in the designated time including the formal studies like the ASSAF report (ASSAF, 2010). Staff struggle with this as Theo notes:

You are probably aware that for masters degree for example the minimum time is about two years. PhDs are now they used to be 4 years they are trying to bring them down to 3 years so ...that's full time yes so that again depends on the type of students you have. Good students they do it in record time while on average

students who need a lot of help would do it in about 2 and half to 3 years Ja but that is how the system is designed 2 years Masters 3-4 years PhD full time (T I.133-140)

The effect of this is to increase attention on who gets accepted into programmes, and what can be done. There are penalties for the staff member should these time limits not be met. The cost for new staff can be multiple not only do they find recruitment difficult, but they also would be unlikely to attract the stronger students. This means then, that they will incur the costs Theo mentions in relation to the weaker students. It is interesting to see the terminology that Theo once again uses in this discussion which may be quite unusual for an academic but does reflect a more commercial or marketised mentality. He draws on a managerial discourse related to labour and employment:

Well my boss will come down hard on me So I mean.... Besides I mean it does pay to produce a PhD student so the more you produce the more you get paid but the money doesn't go into your pocket goes to your research fund so ja that is one of the negative effects if you don't get the student out of the system quickly enough It has some financial consequences on what you would otherwise get to contribute toward your research besides I suppose it also looks bad on the supervisor it almost looks as though you are not doing enough to help the students move along.. (T I.142-151)

He styles his senior colleagues or head of department as “my boss” which may be quite foreign in an academic context which has traditionally been more collegial (even if hierarchical). Foucault would note that issues of surveillance here draw also upon issues of reward and punishment to engender self-regulation. Theo notes that students and/or theses are products, and discussion of what ‘pays’ in terms of general cost, but also clearly financially, places this firmly in a commercial transaction mode through the discourse used, where academics are employees rather than professionals in a vocation.

As noted earlier for Theo his narrative reflects an emerging concern with establishing his research and shaping his academic career. In this regard he shows a strong interest in connecting his research to industry, and that this connection will influence the way he approaches his teaching. It seems that this might have a greater skills-focus with an emphasis on application as a consequence:

Collaboration with industry is one of the key things that triggers questions of interest – because I have been more interested also in structuring my teaching both at undergraduate and postgraduate level to be more in line with development of certain key skills that the industries that I am interesting in applying ... (T I.52-55).

He later reiterates this in his description of the kind of research being done, and its effects. This knowledge/power dynamic certainly promotes individuals, and they can draw on influences beyond the institution. Such inter-relationships with industry and/or government and their effects have been explored in research around the triple and quadruple helix, engagement, Mode 2 knowledge, private-public partnership and other descriptions of higher education trends (Gibbons et al., 1994; Johanson & Mårtensson, 2011) which, in particular, highlight the shift towards a more commercialised, instrumental and utility focused sector. Whilst there has always been a degree of interaction between industry and universities, there has always been a great deal of caution related to the financial aspects and how this influences the kind of knowledge and the veracity of that. Such reservations are closely related to the protection of academic freedom and autonomy as well as influence-free knowledge production. This kind of aspect though, has recently become more prominent. Whilst previously privileged knowledges have diminished in status, knowledges formerly subjugated in the context of the academy are gaining ground. The opportunity for these kinds of collaborations clearly enable this young academic to embrace the kinds of applied research that he sees as 'useful', and thus there appears to be the emergence of a more instrumental researcher whose focus has shifted beyond the university to include industry needs. This seems to be the focus of his networking rather than any emphasis on the more traditional conferences. Within his interview the focus is on research and publishing rather than on the supervisory process. The emergence of a clear concern and an evolving personal project for this individual takes shape through his conscious choice to embrace industry partnership :

Positive spin-offs because even the product that gets packaged ultimately it has influences both from the industry and from the scientific community so that way it makes, how can I put it, research a little bit more interesting gives you more of an idea of where your work is actually contributing or reaching sort of locally...so you would like to do research not just for the sake of publishing although in my current employment that is one of the primary things that I am judged by my research output so trying to balance the needs of the industries is quite an interesting challenge (T1.124-131)

The shift from the more traditional notions of academic activities is clear here, although there is still a tension. The emphasis on research and publishing is still key in higher education institutions and academics are expected to engage in these areas, but now there are other possible outcomes and activities which may be appealing to younger academics and as they exert their agency as Theo does, in moving to this position, other elements are obviously introduced into the academic environment which compete with the traditional ones.

The language he uses is very commercialised, where he sees himself as a 'consultant', he talks of the research as 'products' and that it can have 'spin offs'. What emerges is how collaboration between universities and industry is evolving, and how this may shape academic identities and activities. It became clear that he saw himself as highly connected with industry and the emergence of boundary blurring between different organisations, and practices are in evidence throughout his interview. Distinctions between university and industry have begun to be less distinct and here the young academic is embracing industry and its needs as central to his academic engagement and as enabling for his practice. His networks of power are more diverse than would have previously been seen in academia.

Nevertheless he recognises that working in this new way there are challenges. There are many aspects which enable researchers to collaborate and for networks to develop, and which provide the opportunities to talk to people who are in their field – both practitioners and academics:

Trying to balance the needs of the industry versus those of the scientific community basically collaborating, talking to people in my field of work (T1.56 – 57)

Thus his opportunities to interact with others are broadened and he has access to others beyond the university. Again being able to "talk" is an important feature although each suggestion of this is rather ambiguous as to whether this refers to other academics or to industry employees. Nevertheless, whilst the industry connections offer a host of opportunities he is cognisant of the constraints that are also imposed by the relationship that erode the more academic aspects of the activities:

One of the limiting factors of being associated with industry is all this confidentiality business you know depending on who I do business with. Some industries are much more relaxed about knowledge or the generation of knowledge others you have to swear to some form of secrecy that OK you are going to keep the material confidential maybe until it gets published which sort of limits my interaction with other researchers in the field because then I can't sort of say this is what I am working on how can I do it better or improve the protocol or something like that but in most cases it sometimes feels as like the industries are using us as cheap labour to generate the information and ja and the trick is to always put the scientific needs up first so that regardless of the benefits that the industry will derive you get published... (T1.104-113)

There are echoes in this of the Humboldtian university and the notion that science should be free of influence or bias (Caniëls & Bosch, 2011) as well as the importance of peer evaluation, and that the interests of industry and big business or money contradict this and are not always those of science

or the university. Tensions arise as in this situation when the connection constrains the academic, not only from publishing, but for Theo in particular, from sharing and discussing ideas related to the research during the process. There is a danger that the growth that occurs through communication and collaboration could be curtailed. This is the basis for the view that such close collaboration with industry is a challenge to academic freedom and the development of knowledge.

In some instances such partnerships also affect the students themselves. Through a dis-location or re-location it would appear that in some instances it is distancing the students from the educational institution, and one wonders at what cost. It may be pertinent to ask how well equipped industrial environments are to educate? Yet another question may be 'is it an educational experience or a labour experience that the student has', especially when they are in a work environment rather than an educational one, and what are the effects of this? However, in times of economic constraint it may be the best way to ensure that students have access to laboratories with up-to-date equipment. Theo however, embraces the resources that this offers students:

So what happens is that I can have students at postgraduate level that are not necessarily based at the university but work at the industry and get involved in supervision that way and one of the reasons why they are based at the industry is that the most of the facilities that they need including the material that they are working on is right there so there is absolutely no need for them to be based at the university (T I.119-124)

The benefits for students and institutions are clearly articulated here showing how access to facilities and materials for the research are provided off campus. New mechanisms are coming into play. The resources then are a cost borne by the industry rather than the higher education institution, a practice which grows in importance in financially constrained times within the education sector. What is not addressed is how much pressure there is on such facilities and what or who would receive priority in terms of usage. His reservations about the connections may be even more pertinent in such cases. He looks for support but more for his research than necessarily with the actual supervision process.

The importance of developing a research project and finding a group of students to work with are issues that he returns to later in his interview. In order to attract students it is helpful to have a status, however, in order to develop this status he needs to complete his research projects which need students.

The introduction of a system of quantifying and measuring teaching, along with all other academic activities through a variety of mechanisms has had detrimental effects as clearly documented, and South Africa is no exception. In the institution where the respondents worked a panoply of new mechanisms such as workload formula which staff need to complete each year documenting time on task (although not all tasks are represented and the time allocated is obviously insufficient), productivity units based on graduated students and on publications which are arbitrarily decided upon at executive level, performance management systems and more have been introduced. The effects of these were noted by the respondents in terms of emergent practices.

Julia emphasizes how many of these mechanisms encourage a system that is antithetical to genuine education a view endorsed by a number of the respondents in contradistinction to the direction that the institution seems to endorse through its policies:

I think a lot of students are being pushed into the phd stage before they are mature enough er I know it's a world-wide trend I don't know that it is so much an academic as a financial trend. Universities make money out of it and I'm not so sure its so wise there's no depth of experience or anything if a student is 23 writing a phd or 22 so I'm very glad I got a student whose worked for a few years really wants to do it and decided from her own volition that she wants to do it..(J 1.193-197)

The constraints that the system imposes are made clear highlighting institutional dynamics and agendas which are prioritised as opposed to those of the students and which often run counter to many academics' values.

8.2 Financial Considerations

Perhaps the most influential and most all pervasive of mechanisms is that of finance. Several of the respondents noted how funding and finance directly affected their activities. Given the financial constraints that institutions face they seek multiple ways to secure funding as Julia and the others note. Student fees offer one way to raise funds, and international students who often pay higher fees are often sought after as in the example offered by James.

Funded research, funding for publications and subsidies for postgraduate students are mechanisms that affect institutions and individual academics. These operate at international and national levels through donor agencies, through national funding bodies and through government fiats. In order to gain maximum benefit from these a number of emergent structures are being set in place by

institutions, in this institution policies relating to productivity units, a laid down number of students and publications per each academic along with other measures have been instituted. As such the funding mechanism works across most of the levels outlined by Brante (2001b), which whilst they may work individually at each level, nevertheless show an interconnectedness between levels. This would be interesting to explore but is not the focus here.

Funding is often an issue which can constrain or enable developments at the postgraduate level. This is a mechanism which is consciously set up as a system lever by governments and other stakeholders as indicated in South African policy documents (South Africa, 1997a). It affects which students get in, who proceeds, what they can do, it shapes the research and projects that students do, as well as what the supervisors might do. Paul shows how this can sometimes work and how it has begun to shape supervisory practices, it also reflects different understandings and ways of working in order to fund research and students. As individuals engage these structures they might use the opportunities it provides or as in this case there seems to be some resistance to the way that is being encouraged:

... I like very much students own choices of what they want to study as opposed to prescribing to them. To say I have a grant here which is to study this or that and anyone that likes this money is going to have to study this. If I am going to get funding I am going to get [something] that is broad based where students can bring in their own creativity, what they want to study. And in that regard therefore I am not very much for projects where ... students are doing almost the same study. I have my few problems with that... it is the students starting point which attracts me very much and not my own. (P 1.119-134)

Paul is obviously thinking about his values and philosophy that underpins what he feels he is doing and how he is supervising. Whilst he has issues with some aspects it is clear that he works within the system, adapting his activities within it. It is about stimulating creativity and motivation for the students. His final comment, about focusing on the students' interests rather than his own, shows a particularly humanist stance, which generally reflects in qualitative research outputs. This is not unusual in social sciences which often focus on individual development and where students work on individual rather than team research projects. However, he also notes how with increasing numbers his approach may be problematic given the kinds of students now entering the system and indicates that access is being driven by primarily financial concerns. Mechanisms of massification, financial incentivisation and productivity as well as the kind of student, influence supervision at an individual level. The contradictions emerging in the system are made apparent through this reflection and the consequences for the supervisors:

... we are operating under a difficult system in that on the one hand finances are hard to come by so we are supposed to take a critical mass of students but on the

other the supervision process is so slow because of the nature of the student we have, the system is clogged with pipeline students who appear at one point, reappear at another, reappear at a third point so that process is very very difficult actually. (P I.173-176)

The insistence in many of the policy documents and research such as the ASSAF document, the White Paper on Postsecondary Education, the CHE statistical report on postgraduate studies for increasing postgraduate numbers is reflected clearly here (ASSAF, 2010; Bradley et al., 2010; Council on Higher Education, 2009). Paul highlights a number of contradictions that are emerging within the system, and which affect the ways that supervisors operate and the challenges it may offer to individuals and the contribution to their academic identities. In particular the tension between time and demanded performance is constantly highlighted. Individual values and integrity may be challenged through the process.

Nevertheless, he sees that his own desire for development in certain areas dovetail with institutional desires. The economic model being implemented in higher education is clearly recognised by Paul who describes the system drawing on the discourse of productivity and marketization as a:

... production process where you have your input process and your output. The institution would want the output as early as possible because of subsidies and so on .. (P I.66-68)

In his description Paul outlines the drive within the system to meet the requirements for becoming a particular kind of institution, or score in the rankings, or meet the requirements of the HEQC:

... as we have more and more academics getting higher qualifications one would hope that things are going to be changing. So this institution insists that people are going to get PhDs and one hopes that the more we have people with PhDs the better the supervision. But I wouldn't want to say that it is automatic, that it follows directly. There are people that are quite experienced in this, who may not have PhDs, who may do an equally good job.erm. (P I.85-89)

He describes the system but is not overtly critical of it or its operation. Whilst he does offer some questioning of assumptions underpinning aspects of the theories he nevertheless makes it clear that he works with these. His questions point to the emerging tensions within the system. His own ideas of development and research feature extensively in the tale in which he often identifies with the institutional goals “ *one hopes that the more we have people with PhDs the better the supervision*”.

Through his narrative the issue of time as a particular constraint is a thread. He notes that the mechanism of increasing workloads particularly may affect this. He notes the greater pressures on

academics and once again tries to think how this might be accommodated. In this his identity is very much tied to that of the institution and broader system within which he works:

...we still have many of our academics not doing the minimum of one article per year as required, might in itself tell us that capacity is .. of course we understand that there are many many issues that come into play many people are teaching from beginning of the day to the end of the day and they are teaching large classes but at the end of the day the system still want them to come up with one article. So the workloads are not a small matter. Sometimes we underrate them but they are a big issue. But one would want to see a situation where one can convert that workload to their own research but what I said earlier on their own practice. (P l.165-171)

The system itself is seen as an issue and how to ensure that academics can conform seems to feature consistently. It is the academic, he seems to suggest, who needs to change for at no point does he provide system critique. He aligns his efforts with those of the institution.

The structural effects are noted, and some of the possible negative or even unintended consequences outlined. Thus some structures put in place to minimise 'risk' may engender the very dishonesty – finishing students work for them – that they are intended to limit. She sees that the effect of many of the policies has been a rather perfunctory compliance which runs counter to the educational aspects

Funding affects supervision in a variety of other ways, in terms of how resourced the department or discipline is (is it "viable") an aspect which both Theo, in his reference to new buildings and laboratories raises, and Shandy who indicates the constraints the performing arts work within, note the importance of. Institutions through their policies provoke a range of emergent practices. So the decision to fund full time, full thesis Masters and PhD students affects the choices students make when applying for study. It affects what disciplines and individuals are prepared to spend time on given the multiple pressures on them. It constrains curricula. It may also constrain what support mechanisms are possible or are likely to be put in place, as well as who is selected onto programmes. This may run counter to other policies which proclaim broadening access, or social justice agendas. Such contradictions are evident.

The way students may be constrained or enabled by funding opportunities affects what and how they can do things and this in turn enables or constrains supervisors. Such issues were referred to by Priya and Shandy, along with others. Not only can students make use of institutional opportunities for funding, but they may have access to a range of scholarships, bursaries or even funding from

their places of employment. In similar fashion they may be obliged by their employers to upgrade their qualifications and therefore embark on postgraduate study. As such this may affect their motivation, their commitment as well as influencing the calibre of students who might apply for study. Julia highlights some of the consequences of this kind of environment:

There is an enormous amount of pressure from the side of the university on both supervisors and students on this whole productivity thing er phds have to be rushed masters have to be rushed they have to be completed in time erm and that's the kind of pressure that wasn't that bad 20 years ago but and I'm not apart from this whole prestige thing that the university has to be among the top 500 or something erm it's also a money thing and I can understand that funding is important but I'm not sure we don't sacrifice students in the process and force phds and masters degrees especially masters degrees that quite often are not up to standard erm ja I'm concerned about that it becomes a kind of production line er and you see it in some departments where people have 15, 16, 17 masters honours ..Phd students I don't know how they do it I don't think it's healthy... there's a huge pressure to produce and turn it out..because its pushed so fast that people cannot do the vast amounts of reading that happened 20 30 years ago before a phd or a masters so it's mostly a policy drive to turn them out so we get the funds (Ja I. 236-250)

The role of the institution in the drive for rankings, and for financial attractiveness is clear. That funding plays a significant part in shaping the context is again highlighted in this respondent's experiences, and the way that this affects practice. The dangers of such a mechanistic and technicist approach to education, especially at this level, and to her particular developmental approach, are clearly outlined by her. It is a challenge to her identity and developmental project and she can see the proclivity towards dishonesty and cheating as a possible response:

If that was important to you prestige and brownie points on productivity I suppose you could become impatient with the development of the student you could start pushing the student or you could drop standards or start writing for students we know it happens erm ja I think that would be one result of this huge drive that there will be more and more supervisors pitching in and starting finishing chapters for students (J I.252-256)

The structural effects are noted, and some of the possible negative or even unintended consequences outlined. Thus some structures put in place to minimise 'risk' may engender the very dishonesty – finishing students' work for them – that they are intended to limit. She sees that the effect of many of the policies has been a rather perfunctory compliance which runs counter to the educational aspects

Science has always had particularly strong links with such funding bodies because of the need for expensive equipment and materials, but also because of the role that scientific innovation plays in

national economies. In this way different structures such as funding bodies, relate to disciplines, to institutions and to academics in systematic ways, becoming part of the social system. It is worth emphasizing then, that such social systems which may seem to be set up in strong and quite prescriptive ways are nevertheless, especially in social spaces, open systems (Archer et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 1989; Lawson, 1997). Funding plays a large part in the way research systems operate. It is clear therefore that funding might be both an enabling and a constraining factor. Tabitha implies the research might not be possible without the students since they are the “workers” and the funding enables their engagement which adds a new dimension to supervisory relationships. For Tabitha and Tim this is a process that works for them, and which they are comfortable in – it is in their terms “the way it is”.

Given these funding realities there is much pressure within the institution for all researchers, regardless of discipline, to pursue this kind of funded research. The increasing focus on funding in the institution, and the need to find different funding sources, also creates points of tension between researchers and institutions and encourages a much more individualistic focus within institutions. This surfaced briefly in the discussion:

We support all our students with our research money, money we bring in. The department gives us nothing never has. Even when we were well funded we've never even a bliming ream of paper you know, they don't give to you and that.. it annoys me you know because we are doing quite a lot for the greater good of the university by training the students and I think that the fact that because we have got research money we have to pay for everything and subsidise people who actually aren't able to bring in the money I think that is a little unfair (T&T I.499-505).

Nevertheless, there can be real advantages to sourcing funds externally, and Tabitha was not unaware of these. As such, external funding enables researchers to pursue their chosen projects, and creates opportunities for supervision as well. Later she noted that “..we get our funding and we do as we like. The university cannot tell us what to do as long as we get the funding” (T&T I.593-4). It maybe, however, that it is easier for some groupings to get funding than others, especially given that mechanism such as bodies like the NRF indicate their priorities, thus leveraging the system in particular ways. This means that different disciplines are affected in different ways by such funding processes. For some it can be enabling, for others a severe constraint as Shandy noted earlier in relation to the performing arts. Difference in disciplinary ways of working, and in engaging in the postgraduate project are evident and make it easier or more difficult to participate in the funding processes that work in higher education and in these instances the contradictions within the system

become evident. Timothy noted the differences in task for supervisors working in different disciplinary domains, identifying different ways of publishing especially with students, and how funding affects the process:

there are different almost philosophies of publishing the route is through a number of short papers. When I say short I'm talking about 10-15 pages, in the humanities it is one final product in the form of very often published as a book.. there's also different philosophies of sharing publications which students erm in the sciences it is very often the supervisor's project anyway he's the one who thought about it. The supervisor's the one who provides the resources, the financial resources and the infrastructure and puts in a lot of hard work during the process... and in the writing and is acknowledged (T&T I.262-268).

In other disciplines students might need much less in terms of funding, and may not be working in a project environment changing the roles and responsibilities of both in these regards. Funding and the necessity to engage with funding bodies such as the NRF, is a pressure which is increased by institutional needs and pressures for funding. The supervisor then needs to be able to devise projects that incorporate students, to maintain, monitor and report on such as well as produce the deliverables. Paul's comment about students all doing very similar projects reflected the way some in the social sciences are responding to these emergent demands (see p. 187). Those that are able and access the structures early, are in a much stronger position than others. Another approach that is being taken up is the route of degree by publication. Whilst this is more usual in the sciences it is a relatively new process in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Priya comments on this process in relation to her own studies which she is doing via the publication route.

New staff may find becoming part of the funding network a slow process. In terms of getting a project, funding it and ensuring students to work on it, funding is an important enabler or constrainer. New staff may not yet have experience and are therefore less likely to be funded. Theo indicates that he is now able to begin engaging with the funding bodies which will mean that he engages the structures in similar ways to Tabitha and Tim and shows how enabling it can be:

At the moment I can access funds now directly from the NRF and I can motivate bursaries and stuff like that for the students. Part of the pack includes running costs, conference attendance that sort of thing depending on how good the application was. The money is generally good and what also helps are the research facilities state of the art building where we are now (T I.153-157)

As a member of staff with a PhD he now has some chance to access funding for his projects, and for his students, from the national body which funds research. There is a move towards entering and

consolidating the existing system. This enables access to a range of resources and an expanding network of opportunities such as conferences, and individuals. Funding also enables Theo to attract students, although whether these would be the kind of students he wants might be another issue. Again such structures support the kinds of activities in these disciplines. This is particularly pertinent in a situation where students are full-time which in this discipline he indicates they are. Such students require funding for study and living expenses. Whilst he sees the benefits for the students he is very focused on the effect on his newly emerging researcher status. He also reflects that currently the facilities offered by his institution also support his activities and enable him to further his emerging concerns:

Because you know I sort of never had my own lab or a lab I could refer to as my own now I have one and I can sort of start adding or... building it up (T I. 159-160)

Supervision then may be affected by the resources that an academic can access, and this may be circumscribed in a variety of different ways.

Whilst Theo's tale reflects how funding affects the status and practice of supervisors, Shandy, reflecting on the students, notes how this affects them, and therefore affects supervisory practices. The life placement of students entering postgraduate study in this discipline is seen as affecting the process and the anecdote reflects how students manipulate the system. The fact that in Shandy's instance they are generally working professionals needs to be taken into consideration. Of 12 students that were enrolled at the time of the interview 8 were part time. In a telling comment which shows student agency in relation to the structures she notes " *at least 8 of them are part-time I think most of them register full time I have to say because it means they get NRF funding*" (S I.126-7). Students try to find ways to access the system, including through fraudulent claims, often registering full time when they are in fact working. Through its policies the NRF funding directly affects what students do, the experience that supervisors have in the process of supervising those students, which students access the system and how, as well as the curriculum. So by funding only full time and full thesis students particular practices are beginning to emerge.

Such activities were raised by more than one respondent. James indicated similar trends with his students. This affects the way programmes are put together, what can be expected of the student and of course with the time-lines it increases pressure for all the stakeholders in the system because of the pressure to complete in minimum time. Since funding is also linked to the time to completion this is an additional consideration. So whilst funding is often an enabling factor it also acts to

constrain certain ways of working and certain activities. Thus the structural aspects of their situation affects the learning process since students are not available at all times as full time students are. This affects what can be done, and when, both in terms of curriculum and performance. The negative effects are clear:

I think it goes deeper than just this institution I think it's about looking, for me, it's about reassessing the entry levels for students and asking the HSRC and any other kind of funding bodies to relook at the coursework processes erm coursework programmes I think .. I mean there are still 60% MA dissertation there's still substantial writing but I feel with the nature of the students that we have erm and with the lowering of entry levels I think the coursework is something that has really particularly in [discipline] been something that has really significantly assisted the students erm and also they are not at sea because the coursework guides them into the thesis... I think it's the NRF I would really ask you know structurally for the NRF to really relook at that thing of not funding you know coursework... (S I.207-215)

The way the system then generates particular responses, these newly emergent practices shows in the way both student, and then staff, are affected. Through her discussion her commitment to the students, care for their needs and for embracing an educationist approach is apparent. The emergent practices for institution, department/discipline, supervisor and student are clear. She noted that this affects supervisors who struggle to support their students, and who are constrained by not being able to put together a programme in the way they would see fit. This obviously runs counter to the notions of autonomous academics, and as she notes this is because of funding realities.

The funding mechanisms at the level of the Real substantially affect the system, and the practice at the level of the Actual. However, this also reflects a societal issue affecting performing arts generally, where they struggle for existence in a world oriented not only to money but to profit making. Thus a number of mechanisms work together in a harmonious way to create particular environments:

The funding landscape has changed so much in the last 2 years as well you know I mean to be a practicing artist perhaps anywhere in the world means you're struggling with funding erm. I think it's particularly difficult in Africa I think it's even worse here because we don't have things like Indabas for the Arts and our own National Arts council change the goal posts every year so erm that's people who want to go into making art they know that before they get to an MA level (S I. 421-426)

This may mean that it would be difficult to attract numbers of students, something Shandy notes, despite the fact that if graduates go into teaching they are often encouraged to get further

qualifications which is more positive for the discipline. The limited vocational opportunities may affect the attractiveness of the discipline for students.

Like other respondents Shandy reflects on the range of financial considerations that affect the supervision process. The national drive to increase levels of education, and in particular to increase doctoral output has seen funding being used to leverage this through national research funding bodies and initiatives as well as through the education funding formula. Thus there is pressure to increase postgraduate enrolments but in line with the funding requirements of these bodies. Where funding is reduced or restricted for certain postgraduate forms, in this instance for coursework Masters or for part-time study, these options become less favoured, whilst other options such as full time and full thesis study are encouraged. This does not take into consideration the student, their educational needs, or their life situations. This affects both students and particular disciplines. National funding tends to be channelled mainly to the so called scarce skills, science, maths, engineering and others rather than the so called softer subjects such as languages, art, music or culture. Disciplines in these areas therefore find attracting funding difficult and they are at risk in the more instrumentalist institutions. The performing arts fall into this category.

Disciplines particularly in the Humanities and in the Arts are under threat in the new utilitarian dispensation in higher education and in society generally (Nussbaum, 2009). They need to be able to show their relevance and usefulness, they must highlight the vocational nature of their offerings and find sources of funding for both their teaching and research. There is a requirement for minimum numbers of students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in order for the area to be 'viable'. With the disciplines, especially in the humanities, under threat there is added pressure on individual academics in a whole range of ways.

Where students face constraints this also affects the supervisor, which is seen in a number of the narratives. Here it is not just the issue of dealing with candidates who are both students but working adults in complex working environments, but also, as other interviewees indicated, one of funding for students and their projects:

The other aspect of the research that I find not too good in terms of funding for the research for example for the registrars that I am supervising now the data collection sheets and the questionnaires they had to fund themselves because I must say the department really don't give funding for for research because I apply outside generally most of the funding you see comes from you must have either a doctoral or research for a doctoral degree really very little funding we get the university doesn't actually fund a masters thesis so we also have to tailor our

research so where we can minimise costs as well, so interviews, all that the costing probably just includes the photocopying of the questionnaires and then paper, whereas if it is a laboratory based study then you must think of the hire of the laboratory, .. we try and avoid things like ...unless there are sponsorships. (Pr I.142-151)

Thus projects themselves and the kind of research the student do may be constrained by available funding. The size of the dissertation is also an issue. Given that this is a mini project supervisors need to know what activities are feasible and appropriate – Priya noted the issues for the supervisors:

We are quite limited in the fact that actual research itself must be done within two weeks because they need to study for exams so time is a constraint in terms of what research is done and most of them are like audit based where they just look at a retrospective review of er charts or just interview patients or an assessment of the patient when they leave the clinic so those are the kinds of skills.. (Pr I.155-159)

This is very different from other disciplines and faculties. It implies different project skills, different kind of writing and of effort involved. It may also limit the kind of learning that occurs at this level in terms of developing research skills, which can impact on later levels. This would then need to be considered when making assumptions about what research knowledge and skills these students bring with them to PhD level, for example. Whilst acknowledging the very different structure in the medical school Priya did not elaborate on this as it affects postgraduate supervision. From her description of the process it seems that she very much is left to reflect on her approaches for herself, she does not talk at all about mentors or colleagues with whom she discusses these issues.

8.3 Conclusion

The challenges articulated by the respondents in this section indicate, in particular, the elements of the system that they engage with. In the previous chapter the focus was largely on how individuals moved into the supervisor's role, how they aligned themselves, and how their own interests and concerns guided their entry. It focused on how this group of interviewees became, or learnt how to be, supervisors. In this chapter the particular elements with which they engage having assumed the role, have been noted. The emphases here focus on how the 'people' engage with the 'parts' (Archer, 1995). As indicated in earlier chapters, much of the literature on supervision is relational and focuses on the relationship between supervisor and student, much less so on the contexts within

which they both operate. In research on the postgraduate sector there has been very little attention paid to issues of structure and agency related to supervision. In their narratives these supervisors drew attention to the way in which certain structural and cultural aspects affected their activities and to which they responded. The strength of drawing on the micro level, is that it is within each particular context that different configurations of interacting mechanisms impact. As Brante (2001b p. 184) notes the goal is to identify the social structures which encompass causal mechanisms that generate particular effects, “.. socialization is an umbrella concept for a number of powerful mechanisms linking individuals to other levels” and which constitutes the context for phenomena such as supervision that one might be seeking to explain. As such then they influence how individuals enact their roles. These interactions reflected a variety of responses clearly demonstrating that individuals engage structures and the cultures in multiple ways depending on their own understandings and projects as they exert their different identities in this specific role. That is tempered equally in their interaction with their students. Their particular situations and their historical and social associations afford them a variety of opportunities as well as constraints, and various shifts of power become clearer as one questions what underlies the different phenomena that they identify.

Whilst most often our engagement with others is seen as relational there is a sense in which the groups of people that we engage in processes such as in staffing, and recruiting, the groups involved are as much structural as they are individuals. Thus here we see that recruitment of students plays an important role in both supervision, and in relation to supervisor identity. Equally, the calibre of students as a characteristic becomes part of the resource base that individuals draw upon or which constrains supervisors pushing them to withdraw or to invest more to get less prepared students through the system. These aspects act directly as constraints or enablements, determining intentions and activities that supervisors can engage. When these work in tandem with other mechanisms such as new policies relating to performance management, or productivity units it may exacerbate pressure, or provide incentive. It seems though that there was a general move by both experienced and novice supervisors towards becoming much more selective and seeking to exclude so-called weaker students. This runs counter to the idea of increasing enrolments in postgraduate qualifications as indicated by national policy and international strategy. There is a need to explore the effects of various policy moves on the process to identify what is being achieved.

Internally, institutional configurations affect the respondents. This relates to questions such as: how far supervisors are free to decide their own actions, and how far they operate within, or are constrained by the social settings in which they practice. In South Africa where universities have been differentiated into comprehensive universities (ie: mainly undergraduate teaching and both degree and vocational training), traditional universities (range of degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels) and finally universities of technology (largely vocational and professional degrees) the type of institution would exert pressure. In this case a traditional university, which styles itself as research intensive, is a structure that affects those who teach within it. Particular cultures develop within these, an emphasis on research, an insistence on qualifications, on ratings and a pressure to increase both research and postgraduate throughput would all be characteristics. A variety of structures such as institutional ratings, NRF ratings, numbers of PhD students and staff qualifications affect practices. It is these that are reflected through the respondents' tales, and which bring individual values and beliefs into focus as they encounter and work with these elements. It requires stepping back to explore how, for example, pressures felt by a supervisor in pursuance of the role and their own projects, are related to the size and standing of the department and discipline both within the institution and in the broader academic community. In particular aspects such as finances working at a variety of different levels, international, national and institutional exert their SEPs in the supervisory exchange. These were reflected in the tales.

The move towards greater national and institutional control was evident in the stories, with ever more decisions about who might participate in the postgraduate process, how that process will be structured, being made outside of the disciplines. Influences of outside players such as industry or other organisations were felt by participants in varied ways, not only shaping practices but also influencing the way academics see themselves. This is reflective of power shifts within institutions. Studies which focus mainly upon the supervisor student relationship, or on the influence of the process only, tend to neglect the broader influences on the process. Only by engaging the broader mechanisms as well as the more immediate factors, actions and interactions can one get a more complete understanding of the process. So the process may be shaped by individual intentions and actions however these occur in interaction with disciplinary, institutional (including departmental) and broader social and political structures.

In departmental terms the size of the department, particularly in terms of staffing, but also physical location, programmes and in relation to students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) may have a significant effect on teaching and supervision, in terms of workloads, resources and positioning in

the institution itself. This is an area seldom explored, especially in relation to staff and their teaching. The effects may then be exacerbated if the discipline itself has the same profile as that of the department. A department is an institutional structure, whilst the discipline is a more international structure unrelated to particular institutions and these two mechanisms may act separately or in combination. The two may have considerable overlap, or they may have quite different structures. Shandy indicates that her department, with only a few staff members, has a similar disciplinary profile in that there were very few academics in this discipline with PhDs. The discipline is one of the more constrained disciplines. Paul however, is in a small area of speciality in the institution; however the area or discipline itself is larger elsewhere. James as a member of a large department, and discipline also practices, and is carving out a strength, in another smaller area which is quite different. His skilful juggling allows him to draw strength from the one to support him in the other. In particular the size and influence of the department impacts on resources for teaching, being a constraint in relation to workload, student numbers, choice of examiners, of the roles individuals need to take up, the kind of research that can be engaged. This structural mechanism is quite powerful, and may interact with several others. Respondents indicated particular aspects such as size (both institutional and national), vocational connections (ie: shared teaching with outside units such as in medicine or education), or profitability, influenced supervisory activities and relationships. These also affected power relations, supervisors in well situated, powerful departments or disciplines were less constrained than those that were smaller, and less secure. They were able to take up the role of social actor as member of this group. This shows how the relationships between practices, and structures or cultures, disciplines or departments, and systems influence intentions and actions in particular contexts. Thus it points to how a role is taken up differently in different structural contexts. It is also clear how mechanisms interact in different configurations, and are contingent. Supervisors who encounter these different contexts have the ability to choose different approaches to their interactions, and adapt to the circumstances. These issues raise the question of the role that disciplines and departments play in supervisory practice and how they influence the relationship between supervisor and student. There is limited research that looks at the effects of disciplines on teaching (Bernstein, 1971; Lueddeke, 2003; Trowler & Knight, 2000b), and even less on the effects of discipline, or department on supervision and these interviews brought this structural and cultural interaction to the fore. This applies equally to the impact of the institution on supervisory interactions (Motshoane & McKenna, 2014).

However, whilst the pragmatic structures of departments and disciplines affected practices, so did the epistemological structure of disciplines. These have been noted by Biglan (1973a) and Bernstein

(2000), who indicated the differences between disciplines characterized by vertical knowledge structures and those by horizontal knowledge structures. In those disciplines with a more structured project based approach there was a different relational engagement than those where students came with individual topics, although this was not overemphasized. They required different processes, resources and levels of formal structure and clearly indicate the variety that is supervision.

Respondents reflected a concern that the introductions of mechanisms of control indicate a significant move towards a more standardised practice, and a pressure towards conformity which several resisted through their discourses of 'one size doesn't fit all' as well as their attested practices. As Robey and Markus note these kinds of introduction are a "...political process in which various actors stand to gain or lose power as a result of design decisions' (as cited in Dobson, Myles, & Jackson, p. 154). Nodes of resistance are interesting points to study since this is a push against the shift of power towards a more centralised control and a challenge to institutional decision making. Having noted these points it is apposite to indicate that such structures can be effected in a variety of different ways, and in this can act differently in varied contexts. This may be not just the result of the context, but also of those who enact the structure engendering varied responses to it. Thus mentoring may be received in a variety of ways because it is enacted in a distinct manner for specific purposes, or because individuals engage it in different ways as we see with Theo and Paulina. Tales relating to institutional structures such as the higher degrees committee varied, whilst other policies such as new policies relating to performance, promotions and productivity also impacted in a variety of ways on the process. Individuals who are not productive, or are seen not to be performing are judged, and corrective measures are implemented or they are duly sanctioned. They may indeed be excluded as supervisors depending on their qualifications, or have numbers of students imposed upon them. What was clear was that questioning particular instances showed the ways in which different mechanisms came together, and were engaged agentially by supervisors, but in interrogating these instances it becomes clear that different levels interact.

It would seem that concerns about the effects of homogenising practices are that it stifles critical thinking and innovation. This was noted by some of the respondents and in particular Tim notes greater constraints on fun and exploration in favour of time to completion, and greater pressure for conformity. Julia has similar reservations, and notions. This raises questions about the intentions and outcomes of postgraduate studies and qualifications more broadly. If the intention is to contribute to knowledge building, creativity and innovation, especially for economic and national development

then the reflections of these supervisors raised questions about the ways in which supervisors in such contexts were being assisted to develop this. It was clear that disciplinary cultures were on the whole being challenged, and the characteristics of the students, courses and content were being largely ignored in the standardising process. This provided a challenge for individual identities and practices. What is the effect of diminishing disciplines on knowledge building? Similarly, the departmental situations, and these were not necessarily synonymous with discipline, also affected practice in particular ways. Whilst Trowler and Knight (2000b) indicate how the culture within departments can have significant effect on teaching and learning relationships, the size and configuration may also influence practice in a variety of ways. It certainly appeared that the respondents often sought to fit their disciplinary cultures, in some instances like Tabitha indicating alignment with 'that's the way it is'. Some individuals like James and Julia existed in peripheral positions, and often worked either outside of disciplinary structures or across boundaries. These began to indicate different possibilities for supervisory structures, as Rau (2004 p. 55) notes: "...academics belonging to marginalized disciplines are no longer able to teach in a manner that matches the specific requirements of their subject matter". Theo whilst comfortable in the disciplinary and departmental space also reflected boundary crossing in his work outside of the institution. His work within industry provided insight into this. Boundary crossings also offer constraints or enablements depending on other factors.

It is acknowledged that financial configurations are a powerful mechanism within the higher education context. This was clearly reflected in the interviews in relation to disciplines, supervisors, research and students. These reflect in particular the ways in which power can be shifted through this mechanism. Students engage different funding possibilities within the postgraduate sector, and this distinctly affects the supervisory relationship and practices. The difference in national or institutional funding for postgraduate students, who gets funded and who doesn't has had noticeable effects on all participants in the process, changing practices and emergent tendencies. Changes at the broader level, such as the financial underpinning to the emergent discourses of efficiency, productivity has led to the idea of counting numbers of graduates, as has time to completion. Both of these have affected not only the relationships supervisors have with their institutions, but also with their departments and their students. Recognition of these evolving pressures generally have met with resistance, as articulated by the more experienced staff in particular. Supervisors in this group overall used the language of education and development in tension with the neoliberal discourses. Nevertheless, there was a recognition of the momentum that the globalising pressure have. Given the need for more supervisors there is a potential for a

countervailing position, especially in the face of a lack of capacity and imperative for greater numbers and throughput.

The individual stories reflected the South African situation, as well as the local university environment. Whilst the thrust for broadening access, especially in the South African context has had some success, this does not always filter through the entire system. Two particular aspects constrain the postgraduate sector. The first and possibly most significant is that for many students having achieved a first degree they face enormous pressure to go out and earn, both to repay loans, but also to support families in many instances. This may not be ameliorated by postgraduate scholarships which often only partially cover tuition. The second is that there are poor throughput rates at undergraduate levels, and the reduction of entry requirements into the postgraduate programmes is being met by resistance by staff. They reflect on the poor levels of preparedness of those entering the postgraduate sector and which contribute to ever higher workloads. Even where there is a willingness to assist students who may be struggling or less well prepared students, often the most sensible support measures such as coursework options, support courses, workshops or tutors or extended time are not supported by institutions or resources. Financial rather than educational reasoning holds sway. This reflects the financially constrained South African situations even within the Higher Education sector where there are many calls upon finances. Funding both within the sector, and through research groups is being used to leveraging the system. Staff feel this in terms of having to do 'more with less', to constantly be thinking in terms of money rather than education. Students are equally affected especially through the funding mechanisms that allow them to access the system. Thus this means that many educational aspects are overlooked in favour of more instrumental (and often external) requirements.

What this section highlights is that various mechanism influence across levels, and impact at the level of the empirical. However, individual supervisors engage these differently, whilst some mechanisms are instantiated differently. The data raised the issue of how effective individual supervisors might be in resisting the pressures, which mechanisms they found ways of using positively. Increasingly however, it became apparent that despite pressures and changes there were few substantive changes to the structure and practices of supervision within disciplines.

Chapter Nine: Reflexivity and Identity

Increasingly all have to draw upon their socially dependent but nonetheless personal powers of reflexivity in order to define their course(s) of action in relation to the novelty of their circumstances. Habits and habitus are no longer reliable guides. The positive face of the reflexive imperative is the opportunity for subjects to pursue what they care about most in the social order. In fact their personal concerns become their compasses. (Archer, 2012 p.1)

Archer (2007, 2012) maintains that in the modern world we are increasingly faced with the unexpected in our usual spaces and as part of our accepted roles, and that in these moments we need to make decisions about how to act. She holds that more and more the structural stabilities of our society are being challenged and that the more morphostatic situations are giving way to a morphogenesis which is faced on a regular basis. She calls this “nascent morphogenesis” which compels individuals to become reflective in order to be able to engage their situations. Certainly, this description may well be valuable and relevant in the more volatile environments in the current higher education sector. This may well affect how academics engage with others, the beliefs they espouse and how they take up the various social roles and responsibilities, and how their own interests and the projects that they embrace influence how they interact with their environment. Despite this view however, there is evidence that individual activities are becoming ever more circumscribed through a variety of mechanisms that ensure that control shifts away from individuals through structures of surveillance, monitoring, assessment and feedback.

In the process of taking up the roles and responsibilities of supervision and in discussion, individual notions of academic identity, where the beliefs and values related to academic activities lie, and academic concerns, begin to reveal themselves. In this group the various commitments or developing projects of the individuals became clear through their discussions and through which discourses at the level of the Real they draw upon to justify and consolidate these. This section explores how engaging in postgraduate supervision, and the experiences individuals have, reflects individual academic identity, and the values and beliefs that different individuals embrace. We have seen some of the constraints and enablements that affect this group and in this section the effects of these on the individual, through their stories of themselves as supervisors and on their view of

themselves as academics is explored. How individuals manage their contexts in relation to their own projects and commitments comes into perspective.

Individuals may not be entirely free to follow their interests and concerns, but they engage with the resources available, and different structural and cultural aspects of their contexts guided by their understandings. Henkel points to the balance needed between the various aspects of academic demand, but also recognises that individuals may prioritise between these differently:

The critical relationships within which academic identities are pursued are therefore those between individual, discipline, department and institution, although the balance of importance as between these relationships varies between individuals (Henkel, 2000 p. 148)

This resonates with Archer's idea of projects and ultimate concerns (Archer, 2007a). As Henkel (2000) maintains individuals within academia can be placed within a network or continuum of positions and relationships which therefore allows for both homogeneity and heterogeneity within the profession. From those with strong commitments to disciplines whom she refers to as idealists to more pragmatic individuals "for whom membership of the academic profession and the status that goes with that have a higher profile" there are a range of positionings.

Some of the participants are more closely related to their research and discipline, others more distant. In this exploration those who see their academic identity as very much a way of life rooted in their disciplinary traditions and activities, who embrace their research activities but also their teaching are termed **traditional academics**. They draw on discourses of academic freedom, autonomy, and of academic leadership. Less explored maybe those who are not only focused on their discipline, but also see it important to make their way up the academic ladder towards professorship and status, taking on institutional responsibilities such as deanships or executive positions are labelled **career academics**. There were two or three individuals among the respondents who fell into this category, and whose career aspirations therefore may well affect the supervision and supervisory styles. For others they see their foremost identity as educationists and teachers and would see their academic project as developmental. These are the **academic teachers** and their concerns relate to developing the discipline and inducting students into the discipline. In some disciplines this may be particularly relevant where there has been less drive to develop postgraduate programmes for a range of reasons. In one clear instance there was an individual who reflected efforts to build the discipline and grapple with specific disciplinary issues. This was a **disciplinary academic**. Some individuals are moving into new relationships as **career researchers**, where their

research no longer needs to be solidly grounded within academic institutions, but may be in collaboration with industry, or even outside of academia which makes them differ from traditional academics. It was these categories which were used to delineate the respondents in this study.

Tabitha and Tim	traditional academic
Theo	career researcher
James	traditional academic
Julia	academic teacher
Paul	career academic
Paulina	academic teacher
Shandy	disciplinary academic
Priya	career academic

9.1 Taking on an Academic Career or “Stepping up the Ladder in Academic Status”

In the role of an academic the three threads of the teacher, researcher and administrator are well known, although sometimes in more modern times the notion of administration is replaced by management. Interestingly it is seldom replaced by the term leadership which might be more accurate in terms of the traditional academic context, whilst management seems more apt in the newer dispensation focused on funding and productivity. In rare cases however issues of leadership are considered vital for increasingly complex institutions and may therefore become part of institutional discourse more frequently. This will obviously vary within different institutional cultures, and reflect through their practices, culture and structures. For some academics moving through the ranks, and engaging in academic leadership through accepting professorships, deanships or other leadership positions, these often become a greater priority than the other roles. Such individuals tend to have a greater sense of institution. For others research takes centre stage and becoming rated by funding bodies, their research projects and publishing becomes a driving concern. Still others are more focused on the educational aspects. However, often these interests may overlap and it can take a while to decide on the ultimate concern. Related to this are the choices that each make, and how they draw from different structures in a way which provides them with differential power bases. In some cases this might see the instantiating of different mechanisms that might otherwise have remained dormant. It seemed that for some of the respondents in this study these kinds of possibilities were strong drivers and the possibilities certain structures offered

were embraced as enabling for individual projects. By exploring the experiences of supervisors greater understanding of how the different aspects integrate in the daily lives and demands of individual academics.

9.1.1. Paul's Story

Paul, being interviewed in his office, began the narrative of his experience of supervision as a supervisor with his entry into the institution that is the site of this study. At the level of the Real his position within the structures that exist, the institution, the college and school, and the discipline or field itself, is key in the way he experiences supervision. He is a member of a social science discipline, in Biglan's terms a 'soft field' (Biglan, 1973a, 1973b). Paul arrived at the institution, having had some experience of supervising, but hoping that entering a large institution he might have the opportunity to work alongside professors and senior academics, being mentored and learning collaboratively over time. However, this remained only a hope since he quickly discovered that his supervisory skills were already needed "...there was work waiting for me." (P I. 9) As an African black academic he was in demand in an institution assertively pursuing transformation, and he moved quickly through the system, shortly to become a cluster leader¹³. In terms of power, whilst seemingly in a position which lacks institutional supportive intervention and, as a new member of staff from outside under scrutiny of his peers, there is nevertheless a network of structural aspects at national and institutional level which position him quite powerfully in his new academic position. These networks draw upon mechanisms which may or may not be activated. Policies around transformation, such as the White Paper on Higher Education, and the Soudien report, as well as institutional policies and charters, and policies on equity directly affected Paul and his experiences providing him with several opportunities (institution, document nd; Luescher & Symes, 2003; Soudien, 2008; South Africa, 1997a). They provided particular opportunities to move quickly into leadership. The type of institution, large and research led, with a focus on African scholarship and transformation would shape the environment, the policies and structures within which he operated. However, despite the potential opportunities it is clear that there are few supportive structures either.

Throughout his responses whilst he reflected on his own ideas and beliefs in relation to supervision, there was also an interesting focus on staff development more broadly, and the needs that staff

¹³ A cluster is a grouping of similar disciplines working within a school/faculty

faced in terms of improving their practice, as well as a consciousness of the institutional requirements and how staff should be trying to meet those requirements. In reflecting on learning opportunities either through mentoring, or through courses he often extends his own experience and comments onto the needs of other academics. He makes suggestions that such opportunities should become part of institutional structures, yet is cognisant of the fact that others might not see the opportunity or might be resistant:

Yes we have got this system of internal and external examiners but in my experience many disciplines do not really interrogate, explore what comes out of this examination process. If the students have passed they have passed, the reports are shelved. If you want them yes, they are filed. I am not convinced there are enough by the way of people purposively wanting to make from the examination process even if there is not much that the examiner has said... I am not convinced there is enough in that direction. We tend to close the chapter. (P.I. 56-61)

He thinks in terms of the development of other academics as well as himself. Here though, there is also the recognition of such mechanisms of assessment, and surveillance, and he draws upon these to explore ways in which staff may be moulded, made more compliant. This raises the very real tension in relation to training, and support as to how far it enables individuals, and how far it promotes conformity. Can these be seen as means of extrinsically constructing a subjectivity or a means, through knowledge, of support and emancipation? Exam reports are taken as authoritative although there are many reports of disagreements amongst examiners (Holbrook, Bourke, Lovat, & Fairbairn, 2008; Powell & McCauley, 2002). In this way they become constructors of what is acceptable, normal and therefore the measure which should be aspired to. As much a reflection on the supervisor as on the student, Paul sees these reports as a way in which staff can be assimilated to particular ways of behaviour which would privilege institutional values and ways of working. Thus the Foucauldian notion of self-discipline works in this instance for himself, with such structures which provide feedback on behaviour. The examination provides a judgement on the knowledge of both student and supervisor, but at the same time becomes a means of knowledge about what is acceptable and therefore becomes a mechanism of regulation. It also becomes part of the 'domain of truth' that permeates the postgraduate sector. However, Paul also suggests that these should form part of an interrogative process which could lead to reflection and careful consideration, rather than simple acceptance thus making greater allowance for individual constructions rather than simple acceptance. There is an uneasy tension between these two approaches.

Paul sees the isolation as part of the academic experience of supervisors, and which at the level of the Empirical and Actual spreads to other academic areas as well “...everyone in their own cubicle are fine with what they are doing” (P I.55) and that these then become spaces which are protected by individuals. This isolation is one aspect of being an autonomous academic, linking to the discourses of academic freedom. This high level of independence and thus isolation he sees as not only problematic for the individual, but also creating difficulties for the institution when they develop staff development initiatives. In one view he notes the lack of any mechanisms to support or develop staff, whilst in another acknowledging emergent drives within institutions to develop activities such as workshops and courses. Such support mechanisms began informally as academic or educational development on the periphery, but are often resisted by academics, especially those more established members, as activities become more formal. He sees that some embrace structures as enabling, although many are more resistant and may find such as constraints, and this forms an ongoing part of his discussion. Once again such mechanisms are seen to help staff recognise accepted institutional practice and to begin to develop in this respect, a socialising mechanism. Some look for support, but many more ‘retreat to their cubicles’ or resist. Those who engage are often looked at askance by other academics.

The thread through his discussion suggested that his emergent concern in his professional capacity was for institutional development. For example, as he explores ways for supervisors to lessen error, he points to the possibility of using the examiners’ reports. Whilst he recognises staff may be resistant he concedes that they also face a pressure of work, and therefore the last activity on the list of their concerns may be staff development. The institution expects academics to engage in professional development but makes no time allowances for this. Similarly he feels strongly that one should research one’s own practice as teachers (related to discourses of evidence based teaching, and research led institutions), but recognises that this is an area that many academics may not be conversant in “...we don’t have enough knowledge about practice in in higher education so so I think that there is need for these kinds of studies” (P I.79-80). This aligns with an institutional drive to establish a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) as part of the effort to improve teaching within the institution. It is clear that he gives much thought to how one can provide support for academics, enabling them to respond to the demands of the institution and that one of his concerns is staff development not just for his personal development but on a broader scale.

Through his narrative the issue of time as a particular constraint is a thread. In his reflection on issues of publishing, and how academics may be struggling to meet their quota, he notes that the

mechanism of increasing workloads particularly may affect this (see p 215). He notes the greater pressures on academics and once again tries to think how this might be accommodated. In this his identity is very much tied to that of the institution and broader system within which he works. Whilst he notes real concerns that aspects of the system, and process produce, for example equating qualifications with ability, he nevertheless continues to endorse the institutional approach and explores ways in which to ensure that academics can conform seems to feature consistently. It is the academic, he seems to suggest, who needs to change for at no point does he provide system critique. The system seems to be accepted as a given and he aligns his efforts with those of the institution. Potentially this provides him with power, and from here he can progress and become a corporate agent. His outline provides an insight into an academic who is concerned not only with his own development but with that of his colleagues and his area of specialisation. He draws from his own experience but also draws conclusions and decides what others need. Through alignment with institutional processes, and an ability to access opportunity through national and institutional policies relating to transformation, Paul positions himself within a powerful network. Shortly after this interview he became head of cluster which seemed in keeping with his interests expressed in the interview. So despite his desire for a more collegial and supportive approach, the position he initially finds himself in leaves him rather isolated and needing to draw on his own resources.

Paul is an interesting example of someone moving from an outsider position to an insider one entering the institution, looking for ways to engage. Obviously, his discipline already ameliorates the outsider status to an extent, however he still needs to work through the various layers for acceptance. Issues relating to his subjectivity – does he assimilate or does the institution find ways to accommodate him, are foregrounded. Engaging with the various rules and regulations may assist when one has to ‘hit the ground running’ and it seems he does this. The question is does he become a means of transformation, or does he assimilate to the values and norms of the institution?

It seems that Paul is concerned with the constraining features of the system as it puts increasing pressure on academics to be “productive”. In several instances he indicates his thoughts on how individuals might respond, or how to facilitate or support structures could help individuals achieve institutional requirements. In this it would seem that his interest and concern is about how the system works and how he can make this work more effectively for all concerned. In this he is perhaps a career academic, thinking about how he and his colleagues work within the system. Thus the way he engages is one that would tend towards morphostasis, without much challenging the system. The probability is that he will climb the academic career ‘ladder’ further in the future. His

position promoting the institutional agenda provides him with access to a variety of opportunities and resources.

9.1.2 Priya's Story

Like Paul Priya, whilst recognising constraints, was also keen to move through the system. Priya is a female, Indian academic working in the medical disciplines. She indicated that she had been supervising for 2 years, and also had been marking postgraduate projects over a number of years. At the time of the interview, which took place in her office in Medical School, she had 3 Masters students whom she was supervising. Until recently, as with several professional disciplines, it has been fairly rare that medical students completed a thesis for the medical degree, rather leaving for practice soon after completing their coursework. National policy has since changed. With the drive to increase student numbers and research in the postgraduate sector there is a new push to ensure that the dissertation component is completed even in highly practical disciplines as Priya indicated.

It seemed that Priya was genuinely focused on the needs of her students, and in the way she presented the process her own involvement in a number of the stages from identifying the topic to providing the literature was strongly evident. This is shown through the description of the process in the use of "we" emphasizing the collaborative nature of the engagement "*once we had come up with a topic we tried to design how we were going to go about to do this study*" (Pr I.59-60). She engages also the discourse of 'caring supervisor' in her discussion of students.

Towards the end of the interview, however, another much clear concern emerges and highlights, possibly, her own emergent project:

...my overall intention is to step up the ladder in my own academic status because I am still at a lecturer level and to go to senior lecturer level and fortunately for us we don't need a PhD to go up to senior lecturer level. Other disciplines do but initially I thought we did.. three or four years ago when I wanted to go to senior lecturer I was told need a PhD but recently it changed again for medicine don't need a PhD because we have professors who don't have a PhD as well. So this will help in a way with me supervising and again I'm also not only supervising, I also review protocols for the faculty and also mark. I'm an examiner and erm this will basically help in my own academic career so yes it does have an advantage if you are an academic that way you have to go to go up the ladder my intention is to go to senior lecturer and hopefully one day if I'm still around a professor if I can get my PhD (Pr I.189-199)

Thus like Paul, but much more explicitly so Priya indicates that she maybe a career academic, her emergent concern is to move through the hierarchy. Since a career is constructed as moving through

the stages as outlined in any promotions process thus she constructs identity in the light of this knowledge. She also undertakes multiple roles that affirms her membership of the academic community. Her progression will be through the various academic levels, thus working within the structures of the system consolidating them. She is still grappling with the new requirements of the system, in the face of the current realities of the discipline – one in which higher degrees were not seen as a necessity and in which supervision is an individual practice to one in which certification and qualification is required. The ways in which the processes and discourses of career and progression in the academic sphere create Priya as subject influences the way she takes up her supervision. She does balance her approach to the students and to supervision with this view of her own development. To have both qualification and position would provide greater legitimacy in the academic environment.

Career academics it seems are more likely to be focused on institutional requirements and structures. They engage with the various dimensions, and thus consolidate and confirm them. Through this engagement and positioning they have the opportunity to move into groups who can draw on the structural powers of the institution and therefore can exercise the power of corporate agents. As they take on the supervisory role it becomes part of their overall academic identity.

9.2 Encouraging and Developing: Another Approach to Supervision

The research on supervisory styles notes the difference between those who like to be more directive, and those who may be more developmental in their approach (Deuchar, 2008; Gatfield, 2005; Gatfield & Alpert, 2002; Lee, 2008) and whilst this may be influenced by the needs of the student, and the stage of supervision it does appear that individuals have a tendency towards a particular style and this in itself may be affected by their own projects. Often those who are more inclined towards teaching embrace a more developmental and holistic approach.

9.2.1 Julia's Tale

Like Paul, Julia may also have favoured a more supportive introduction into supervision but her position, being marginal in the mainstream structures seemed to ensure that she had to adopt a more autonomous style. Julia was interviewed in her office. She worked in one of the merging institutions prior to merger in 2004 and so in some ways had a sort of continuity within her

academic context. Her work with students entering the university, often through access programmes, placed her in a peripheral position within the institution, since her post was not one located within a discipline. Like many posts in student support, educational or academic development, practitioners often lack a collegial, disciplinary support group, rather they are frequently isolated appointments in small units outside of school or faculty structures. In many instances such positions although classified as academic, the appointees are often regarded as non-academic, support or service, whilst acknowledging that such work requires academics to pursue the required activities. As such both institutional positioning, and academic discourse may seek to create subjectivities of quasi-academic status for those in this position (Debowski, 2011; Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004). Such classification may be challenging for incumbents. Yet Julia's academic disciplinary base, and one which she has maintained some contact with, is in the human sciences, in a growing and complex discipline which itself has several quite divergent areas of specialisations. Individuals in this position have fewer power bases to draw upon, and may find it significantly harder to effect changes. Their call upon the power of disciplinary knowledge may be diminished, as would their institutional power.

Anxiety may be greater when postgraduate supervisors work across disciplines, or outside of their immediate disciplines. Their control over the knowledge is lessened, and they may have to negotiate with other knowledge areas. In areas where supervision occurs across disciplines the supervisor often has a great deal of extra work in order to keep abreast of the additional requirements. She is forced to engage her own ideas in the face of the necessity to make decisions and choices, and so she is frequently self-referential in terms of exploring her decisions in relation to her own thoughts and emotions.

Julia styles herself as a developmental supervisor, interested in the personal development of the individual "*One of my main goals is actually to encourage, I think you help someone develop*" (Ja 1.66-67). This is consistent with her role as an educational developer. This is apparent in the kinds of strategies she selects giving them honest feedback, careful reading guidance, being encouraging and motivating. It is about "a good relationship". Interestingly, whilst there is some sense of collegial interaction, the power dynamic nevertheless remains one invested with the supervisor. She is the one that provides feedback, and undertakes the surveillance, monitoring, assessment and feedback that for Foucault forms technologies of governmentality in terms of the student- supervisor relationship.

Access to a range of resources and opportunities is limited by peripheral placement. Such positioning often increases feelings of insecurity, lack of confidence and impedes development, which in turn exacerbates what new supervisors generally feel when starting out. Julia could be termed an **academic teacher**, one who is concerned with and cognisant of the teaching and learning process, and tries to implement good practice, clearly evidenced by a 'caring discourse' and her continual concern for the student's development through the process. This highlights one of her developing concerns and trajectory for her professional profile. It is one reason why she is sceptical of the institutional processes and seems prepared to support the student in the face of difficult policies. It is clear that for some of the supervisors the student's needs would take precedence for the academic. In other situations different concerns may mean prioritising other aspects and therefore being less inclined to mediate for the student. This raises questions about the influences on relationships from the broader perspective.

She offers a pertinent critique of the trends in Higher Education and highlights many of the contradictions and inconsistencies in the system. Her interest in her teaching, its effects as well as her efforts to find information on ways to approach new challenges (her exploration of texts and websites), shows her commitment to improving her teaching. This may increase her isolation in the face of the increased importance of research in competition with teaching. This is reflective of the dissonances within the system, points of fracture and difference which create instability.

9.2.2. Paulina's Story

Paulina could also be seen as an **academic teacher**. She had been a student at the institution before entering the university's programme to encourage and develop new, young academics, which pays specific attention to those groups who had been particularly disadvantaged in the society. Generally this meant primarily African black¹⁴, women, disabled, and then other categories for redress in government policy. The notion of disadvantage and representivity vary from discipline area to discipline area. This was a three year funded programme, during which time participants were expected to study for their doctorate and do some courses to support their development as

¹⁴ This uses the South African racial categorisations of African black, Indian, Coloured, White, since on occasion Black in the SA context is taken to aggregate all of those disadvantaged under the apartheid system.

university teachers and has been referred to earlier. To enable them to do this they worked with an appointed mentor and were theoretically given lighter workloads. At the time of the interview she had completed this programme and been appointed as a lecturer in her specialisation. Thus like Paul mechanisms to promote transformation created particular subjectivities with its concomitant opportunities, as well as constraining aspects. There were mechanisms of support, which as seen were not in this instance particularly forthcoming. However, with the career pathing she was now able to embark on an academic career, with the necessary qualifications. In these situations the individual is subjected to institutional decision making, about further qualifications, about professional development requirements and about their activities in both undergraduate teaching and learning and postgraduate teaching.

The interview took place in her office, and during the opening moments, where formalities such as an explanation of the process, and signing of the informed consent paper took place, we established that she had been supervising for five years and had supervised 3 students in all at a Masters level. Her first supervision had been as co-supervisor, the other two were solo supervisions. Co-supervision, whilst it can be used in many ways for varied activities, here is a means to support in a way that allowed for modelling as well as surveillance and assessment.

In unfolding her story Paulina began by indicating her deep involvement with her students in the supervision process showing what an emotive process supervising is and how it is linked to individual personality and identity:

...supervision for me has always been a kind of intimate experience that you go through as supervisor and a student and I mean your supervisor tends to be the one person that you know so closely that you interact with not on a daily basis but more often than not and because you sort of develop that relationship it's easy to confide in them even with personal issues¹⁵. (Pa l.68-72)

She notes that the personal and professional are quite intertwined, and because of the professional relationship established between student and supervisor, the personal engagement emerges within that context. The discourse that she embraces is that of connectivity and inter-relationships. This is supportive of her identity as teacher.

¹⁵ All quotes are given verbatim with as little interference from punctuation as possible – some of the pauses (denoted by additional spaces left) and hesitations are included.

So this is a particular strategy she uses, it becomes an enabling process for practical engagement but links with her beliefs, shapes her interactions and the supervision process. Her approach is based on a humanistic and developmental attitude which promotes engagement and enables communication. Through taking into consideration the affective nature of the process and prioritising it she begins to shape her practice.

It is clear that the discipline within which Paulina works shapes her supervision practices in a number of ways. Students, especially postgraduate students, entering the programmes are drawn from professional practice and therefore are generally more mature, working and thus part-time. Few practitioners can afford to take time from their profession to extend their qualifications. Thus programmes have to be structured to take this into account. It means that students' study competes with their professional and family lives perhaps more so than if students are still scholars studying full time, or have not yet entered employment. This is reflected in Paulina's conscious choice of personal connection, and her emergent strategies, which may however be in tension with national and institutional policies which are focused very much on throughput and time to completion and premised on full time uncommitted students.

There are many challenges to identity for Paulina as supervisor. She is frequently younger than her students (see p.197), and has to counter cultural values such as respecting elders, the 'right' way to behave in relation to those older than you, along with other aspects. These counter positionings, especially for someone quite young, can be difficult and create doubts and uncertainties during interactions with students. This is exacerbated when, as indicated earlier, notion of expertise are exposed. So Paulina as custodian of disciplinary values, gatekeeper, quality controller and inductor into research confronts an experienced practitioner, who is familiar with practice in the field. Normative values are indeed called into question in times like these. It may be unsurprising, then, that one way to tackle this situation is to take a more collegial and developmental approach rather than a directive one in terms of supervision.

Paulina shows her commitment to teaching and follows a similar developmental idea to that expressed by Julia in relation to her students. She does not really reflect on her own research or her particular plans for herself as an academic. As newly inducted into academia her particular concerns and interests may still be developing. Like Julia she may be an **academic teacher**.

9.2.3 Shandy's Tale.

Shandy, a white female academic, has been at the institution since 1999 and works in the fine and performing arts disciplines. She has been a long standing and very active member of her discipline and is both an academic and a successful practitioner. As a supervisor at postgraduate level she has graduated approximately 12 Masters students. Her tale begins by outlining her supervision experience which is at the Masters level and her point of reference is her own experience as a student. She is currently studying towards her own PhD. She notes that her experience has been of good supervision. Emergent here are her own values as an academic, her valuing of compassion and caring, which puts her, like Julia and Pauline in the category of developmental academic.

The importance of experience and time to develop is highlighted here by Shandy. These are strongly curtailed by the ever increasing demands which increase time pressures. The individual is pushed to reflect and develop their own strategies without much assistance. She outlines some of the ways she has developed different approaches. Through her discussion her commitment to the students, care for their needs and for embracing an educationist approach is apparent. The emergent practices for institution, department/discipline, supervisor and student are clear. As institutions diminish support for coursework Masters, or actively discourage them, the discipline has to structure its activities to fit with the students' lives, supervisors have to find ways to motivate students and keep them 'on track' in the face of extra demands and students find ways to work the system and get the funding, whilst juggling their various commitments. Funding imperatives have produced a plethora of policies and strategies and one such is the phasing out of coursework Masters which only attract limited government subsidies for graduates. Full thesis Masters attract a more substantial subsidy. As such this creates an instrumentalist subjectivity for the supervisor rather than an educationist one. This may however provoke resistance from academics and it is clear that Shandy might well be one of these.

Given her passion for the discipline, Shandy indicates that she has worked towards the introduction of new forms of postgraduate study within the faculty. This desire and working to introduce new forms of artefact is a proactive process in order to extend the parameters of the discipline. This has implications for supervision and the way that is handled, enabling the emergent practices as they are introduced. Technologies of production fundamentally guide the way supervisors support their students in the production of a thesis. Disciplines such as those in the fine and performing arts have grappled for years with the traditional forms of production, and only recently with challenges being

offered. Resistances have emerged to the usual thesis form, new forms such as thesis by publication, professional degrees to mention a few.

In drawing on power nodes, it is possible to resist the more encompassing demands of the institution, because she can draw on her membership of the discipline. The processes in disciplines are often affected by the status and standing of the discipline within institutions and the type of courses offered, and the size of the departments and their standing in institutions. In this instance the practical nature influences the environment quite considerably:

...they've wanted to go out and make [performance] work or work in development ... so having that in mind we started to create a programme that would allow students at graduate level to stay on and theorize their practice so that's been a growing thing. So that does require different kinds of supervision because you are not just supervising an academic dissertation...you are also supervising an artistic process or a reflection on a process... (S I. 44-50)

She highlights the effect that this new form in postgraduate study has on the supervision process. Whilst the discourse has identified the need for supervisors to be experienced especially in research, and the issue of quite what this means has been raised previously. In this instance the supervisor is also constructed as someone who has skills in creating a performance, along with the usual requirements for a supervisor. She sees herself as both practitioner and academic. This is the identity that she constructs for herself.

The emergence of different forms of Masters and PhDs such as Professional PhDs has been part of an ongoing process for a number of years as new forces engage Higher Education. This is evident through a number of different disciplines, and the performing arts is one area where this is happening. Shandy notes that within the discipline when she first arrived as an academic only a research Masters was on offer with a traditional thesis as product. However, this has changed and she moved on to describe how the process had changed.

We are now offering praxis based research MAs so we call them full MAs ... but we do we run programmes now where students are able to do praxis work that counts for 40 percent and then they write up and reflect a dissertation on on that which counts (S I.35-38)

She describes the role she has played in structuring the postgraduate processes in her discipline, as a member of the academic community in the discipline. So her agency becomes clear:

As I've gone through my academic career of supervising I have also mediated changes in higher degrees in the ways we've structured degrees because

obviously in a discipline like [named]¹⁶ we actually don't attract huge numbers (S l.39-41)

She clearly espouses a developmental and educational approach in contradistinction to the more marketised thrust of the institution. In Foucault's terms this is resistance. Despite the constraints offered by these systemic aspects there are some structural aspects that may be helpful and enable the process to move forward such as the role the higher degrees committees may play in relation to study as indicated earlier. As a member on the committee she has a voice and derives a power to effect change. The committee is one of the mechanisms of surveillance, and assessment through which individuals may derive some power/knowledge. Even within the disciplines which may be more constrained individuals and disciplines may work through institutional structures to effect some measure of change which Shandy indicates here.

Shandy clearly indicates a commitment to the intellectual nature of a PhD rather than its value as a qualification or certificate per se. Her academic identity as teacher, practitioner and developer of the discipline indicate her ultimate concern. However, for this discipline a way to balance both the practical and the theoretical is important. The dual nature of the discipline, in Bernstein's classification a 'vertical' discipline with soft boundaries (Bernstein, 1996, 2000), is emphasized again when she talks about her colleagues:

I mean all of us actually who are here are practitioners as well ... I think that's been the strength of our programme is that all of us have performance related or development related work that feeds into our teaching and the programmes because the students like to be taught by people that are making and doing because it inspires them as well... (S l.303-311)

The practitioners therefore have sought to find a way to bring their practice into the academy in different ways and the praxis based research is one of those ways:

You want to encourage people to reflect on their own practice.... You know that praxis led research stuff and erm it becomes it becomes quite a rich amount of reading and theorizing and its quite new. I can't say that the university ... has been terribly open to it...for example if you go to Yale university and you do their MFA¹⁷ you are being streamed towards a performance career whereas you do an MA you are being streamed to teaching and academia... (S l.324-345)

¹⁶ The name of the specific discipline has been replaced by the word in square brackets to ensure a degree of confidentiality for the participants

¹⁷ MFA is a Masters in Fine Art

She notes that this is the way to attract more students since in some prestigious institutions the students find work easily once they have completed their studies. Here the subtle ways in which the basic assumptions of PhD studies are being changed is obvious. The notion of theorising practice, and developing a philosophy is less relevant than applicability and practice in such instances. She draws on her disciplinary power, that brings into play international practices to leverage a change. Whilst noting the funding constraints she also highlights the important role that such a discipline plays in motivating and the potential that it has to inspire. She links this to the notion of indigenous knowledge and growth in local pride:

I mean our continent is generating the most extraordinary performance based work and erm we should be affording potential students the opportunity to really make and write about that work. (S.I. 407-409)

Whilst there are strong connections to performance based institutions and practices beyond the institution, these institutions carry less power in the social and economic sense than others. Different forms of knowledge, and power relations position people differently, with different subjectivities. Institutions relevant to the performing arts may provide less leverage than commercial ones. Thus, despite the potential to further the African scholarship agenda of the university, connections to such institutions are valued less than those of Theo whose institutional connections to industry have greater economic impact. Nevertheless, drawing on practices in international Higher Education institutions provides a different power influence.

It is clear that Shandy has been largely autonomous in her practice, and her own development. Her passion for the discipline and the development of discipline shine through, as well as her clear commitment to her students and a developmental and educational approach to her teaching. In this it would seem that she is a **disciplinary academic**. She constructs herself as both academic and performer, needing to embrace the skills required for both, and to use these in her supervision.

9.3 Triggering Interest: Collaboration with Industry

In the newer more neo-liberal institutions there is a push to link more firmly with industry and the private sector for a host of reasons, not the least of which is the financial possibilities. The focus on more instrumental research and more application type research also supports this. Inevitably this adds new dimensions to the academic identity. Different relationships are needed, new forms of management and administration and other elements enter the academic domain in much greater

ways than previously. For some academics this provides multiple opportunities, for others it may be much more problematic.

9.3.1 Theo's Story

We met in Theo's office for the interview. Theo, a natural scientist, had come through a programme designed to promote and support young aspiring academics, especially those disadvantaged by particularly, race, gender, or disability and so was immediately in a situation which favoured communicative reflexivity because there are those available for interaction. In this 3 year programme academics were inducted into the institution by having a mentor assigned to them, and having some time and support allocated so that they could complete their PhDs, as well as undergoing some training towards developing their teaching skills. As a scientist, this appointment was particularly prized, since science is a national area of scarce skills, and Theo is a young African black¹⁸ academic. Thus it was especially important in terms of redress and transformation in the South African context. Such mechanisms provide opportunities for those such as Paulina and Theo, even though they might be effected differently in various parts of the institution. During this period Theo also attended several of the courses offered in the unit in which I taught and he had taken some of my courses and ultimately achieved his Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education which in large part emphasized teaching and learning.

His elaboration on his experiences tended to explore more the effect his own degree had had on his academic position and career rather than on how his interactions with students were enabled or hindered. This perhaps gives a clue to the developing concerns and projects and the priorities for this academic. At this emergent stage of his career his concern is to establish himself as a researcher. He is concerned to be able to 'hold his ground' in the kind of research he is involved in and, academically through being recognised as a member of the disciplinary community, to be included in various projects

The promotional programme, with its mentoring and emphasis on the need to fast track its candidates within academic career trajectories, and of which he was part, certainly is an enabling mechanism in the early establishment of his career and access to resources. He indicates how, with

¹⁸ Here I use the South African categorisation where black refers to those of African, Asian (especially Indian), and Coloured (or racially mixed) descent, and African black therefore clarifies the specific grouping within that.

the support and progress, he is gaining in confidence. The language he uses however is telling, he does not indicate how his research positions him as an academic but rather, in the language of the entrepreneur – as a consultant. Since the emphasis of the mentoring programme is career development (with of course concomitant performance requirements) this may be the reason why he foregrounds his concern to establish his research and his response to supervision is seen within this context. The relation between establishing a project and supervision is underscored in his description of issues that may arise in developing the project. It is clear that surveillance, assessment and feedback here work strongly as ‘technologies of the self’ for Theo who is concerned to deliver the required outputs (students and publications).

As noted earlier for Theo his narrative reflects an emerging concern with establishing his research and shaping his academic career. In this regard he shows a strong interest in connecting his research to industry, and that this connection will influence the way he approaches his teaching.

Within his interview the focus is on research and publishing rather than on the supervisory process.

The emergence of a clear concern and an evolving personal project for this individual takes shape through his conscious choice to embrace industry partnership :

Positive spin-offs because even the product that gets packaged ultimately it has influences both from the industry and from the scientific community so that way it makes, how can I put it, research a little bit more interesting gives you more of an idea of where your work is actually contributing or reaching sort of locally...so you would like to do research not just for the sake of publishing although in my current employment that is one of the primary things that I am judged by my research output so trying to balance the needs of the industries is quite an interesting challenge (T I.124-131)

The shift from the more traditional notions of academic activities is clear here, in the shift towards balancing academia and the industry, although there is still a tension. Here it is clear that there is a shift in the control of knowledge in relation to what knowledge counts. Demands from industry are beginning to exert pressure and are becoming powerful determiners of research agendas. The emphasis on research and publishing is still key in higher education institutions and academics are expected to engage in these areas, but now there are other possible outcomes and activities linked to industry activities which may be appealing to younger academics and as they exert their agency as Theo does, in moving to this position, other elements are obviously introduced into the academic environment which compete with the traditional ones. Theo embraces the more applied, instrumental potentials of the possibilities that industry offers.

The language he uses is very much that of commerce and industry, where he sees himself as a 'consultant', he talks of the research as 'products' and that it can have 'spin offs'. What emerges is how collaboration between universities and industry is evolving, and how this may shape academic identities and activities. It became clear that he saw himself as highly connected with industry and the emergence of boundary blurring between different organisations, and practices are in evidence throughout his interview. Distinctions between university and industry have begun to be less distinct and here the young academic is embracing industry and its needs as central to his academic engagement and as enabling for his practice. The embracing of new knowledge potentials becomes part of the power relations that Theo can draw on in the Foucauldian sense.

In terms of his career he is working to make conscious decisions. His focus on a career in research was obvious, and one in which applied research was prioritised. In order to describe him and his interests or concerns one could describe him as a career researcher. His focus was less clearly on the academic environment and indeed shortly after the interview he left the institution to take up a job with a large research foundation. His position in a science discipline with connections to industry would facilitate a range of possibilities.

Despite the discipline being bounded (Bernstein, 1996, 2000), nevertheless the connections with industry have always been a possibility and these opportunities have become more likely in the current climate. Theo has embraced these opportunities, and indeed his interest in research is tempered by its potential applicability, therefore he uses the opportunities to embrace particular power relations and sees new ways of developing his own personal interests as a researcher. Whilst he makes good use of the opportunities to bounce things off his colleagues "*crying on their shoulders*" as he puts it, and clearly makes best use of the mentoring possibilities it seems that he is also keen to move beyond and make independent decisions.

These respondents, in their range of responses and of their experience, within the supervisory environment highlight a range of issues and highlight how they engage the structural and cultural aspects of their situations. Whilst this study did not set out to explore reflective modes in particular such as those Archer explores in her research on the inner conversation there were, however, two interviews which seemed to reflect some aspects of her findings. This may lead to interesting research relating the reflective modes to professional environments and practice. However, since

this research did not explore the natal situations of participants generally reflective modes did not form part of the analysis. Nevertheless, in these two final instances that follow some connections will be pointed to.

9.4 That's the Way it is: Traditional Academia

Archer's description of communicative reflexives focuses on particular characteristics, that individuals who prefer a stable environment, like to stay in their environment, are those most likely to engage in communicative reflection. In this process individuals engaged with others in a deliberative fashion in order to make decisions, and this usually occurred within contexts which displayed a high degree of continuity, little geographic mobility, the development of stable and consistent relationships and occupational continuity. In such contexts it is possible to maintain coherence between the different concerns and projects that they engage in, and generally this supported the notion of strong familial connections. This continuity provided them with a great deal of satisfaction, and thus they saw themselves as contributing towards maintaining the status quo and a situation of morphostasis (Archer, 1988; see also p.27). Generally they need an interlocutor who is "...a 'similar and familiar' in order to enter into the subject's deliberations and decision making" (Archer, 2012 p. 127).

Henkel (2000) clearly articulates there are many different views of the academic identity, and an agreement that the more traditional notions of that identity are being challenged in a range of ways. At one time being an academic was rather like being a priest, it was a calling or vocation which really was a whole way of life, the way one lived and thought. It may not be chance that early universities emerged out of a more monastic life. Drawing on Geertz Henkel makes a similar observation:

Geertz's belief is that disciplines are ways of being in the world. Higher-energy physicists and historians of the crusades 'inhabit the worlds they imagine' – as do the members of any culture. They are not just taking up technical tasks but taking on a 'cultural frame that defines a great part of (their) life' (Henkel, 2000 p.18).

9.4.1 The Tale of Tabitha and Timothy

Tabitha's interview took place in her office and in agreeing to be interviewed she suggested that her colleague with whom she worked closely, join us. Both were academics in the natural sciences. Since they had worked in academic partnership, especially as researchers, for many years, the synergy affects the way both of them approach their supervision and it is often a joint effort, it provided a reflection of her practice, as well as additional insights. The interview therefore happened as an

exchange, often a dialogue, between the two of them, one providing a prompt for the other which seemed appropriate given their intertwined roles. Both were experienced, rated scientists¹⁹ and they estimated that they each had been supervising for about 30 years. They were now in the position of emeritus professors, running research programmes and supervising students, but having the choice of whether to teach on any formal programmes or not.

As students they had studied in the same province, indeed the same city and had ended up as academics in the same institution, and had been there for more than 20 years. It appeared that they had known each other during their student years and had then worked in the same institution, within the same discipline, where they have collaborated in various ways, for most of their academic careers. Thus little or no geographic mobility and certainly occupational continuity would characterise both these academics. They have though, seen changes within the institution through mergers, and the subsequent restructuring, and the shift from a segregated to integrated, transforming, national higher education system. In 1997 the Higher Education Act (South Africa, 1997b) promulgated a desegregated system and the Size and Shape document (South Africa, 2001) set the stage for the merging of institutions and the reduction of the system from 32 to 23 institution nation-wide. Technikons (like Polytechnics) became Universities of Technology – often in merger with universities or colleges. The institution in which they currently work is the product of the amalgamation of first a college and then in 2004 of two universities which has resulted in internal restructuring and physical relocations for disciplines and academics alike.

Despite these changes which fundamentally overhauled the higher education system, and affected the institution, the picture that the tale of these two academics presents is of academics who work in an occupational environment which is and has been, for them, one of contextual continuity (Archer, 1988, 2003, 2012). As part of a science discipline there was perhaps less change in terms of the academic environment, culture and procedure perhaps than in the larger institutional and sectoral space, or for other disciplines. The internal institutional changes were only referred to in a couple of instances.

Their position within the academic system is clearly reflected. They indicate their subjectivity in relation to the national funding body which funds academic research, the

¹⁹ The National Research Foundation (NRF) which funds research also has a system of rating researchers

National Research Foundation (NRF) provides them with a profile and status as researchers in the system. Through the interview it was obvious that this structure, or technology of power, has enabled them to pursue their research, supported their students and has been their funding source as well as providing them with their status (as rated scientists). Thus by embracing the opportunities provided by this mechanism a number of self-supporting and reinforcing processes were put in place for these supervisors and their students, as well as working for their discipline and institution. It is this that contributes to the continuity, with such structures enabling individual projects, at the same time supporting discipline development and institutional aims as well as advancing national agendas. Equally, it allows them to become members of an independent and dominant academic disciplinary group. Thus it is a powerful mechanism and is the knowledge/power that both Tabitha and Tim have accessed to enhance their careers. Those that engage and activate it become social agents with strong ability to effect change. It is part of the recognition process within academia more traditionally but also within the newly emerging ways of assessing productivity.

The different roles that contribute to developing an academic identity here all seemed synergistic, those of teaching, research and administration. Whilst it was clear that this academic was highly considerate and aware of the needs of her students, her commitment to her research was central. In more than one instance during the interview the research is clearly her primary concern and formed the basis for her identity. Nevertheless the overlap between these two academic functions allows the two to be closely related. Thus she comments in relation to students who take time in the system:

I care because I care about the work that they are doing and because I care about their development (T&T I. 100).

Where students are part of a larger research project, delivery is important not only to their progress but for the project as a whole and where other work may be dependent on theirs. Whilst Tabitha obviously cared about the students, it was her work and projects that seemed to take precedence and were of main concern. The focus on their research projects was important for both supervisors and influenced the way they engaged the students. Nevertheless, the two aspects were seen as complementary. Both students and their research were not only linked but they engaged with both in a highly committed way. Students occupy a dual role, that of learner and of worker, whilst the academic is supervisor, mentor and guide, as well as project manager and key researcher.

The concern for the student and the kind of postgraduate experience that they have was seen as important and was clear in the way these two academics spoke of their students. These then also impact on the research, the time it may take and the productivity. The two concerns are closely related, and obviously balanced, especially as students are seen as pivotal to the ability to run and complete the research project timeously. These overlapping roles feed into their professional identity which clearly related to the more traditional notion of an academic as a disciplinary expert both teaching and researching their discipline.

Whilst both indicate deep care and concern for their students, and their discourse is of care and the responsible teacher, nevertheless they also highlight how their commitment to their research plays an overarching role. As supervisors moving from the early stages where they took on “lost” students, and often frequently supervised “out of their field” they quickly begin to devise their own strategies for ameliorating any problems and distractions, to allow them to focus more on their research. They become more selective, and demand particular practices from their students. New faculty rules or structures which enable them to further their objectives with the students are embraced and through such usage these practices are thus consolidated (ie: a morphostatic situation). The power differential between supervisor and student is clear, in this the supervisor is a strong partner in an hierarchical relationship.

However, as indicated earlier (P. 157), given the particular interaction between these two supervisors in the professional and their postgraduate work, they seem to match Archer’s description of communicative reflexives. The constant interaction between them on different aspects of their practice is part of their development. Although they may be, as indicated above part of a group which enables them to be social agents, their role is very much one of maintaining the status quo. We see how they build on points made by the other, reinforcing ideas and points made. It is also clear often in the interview that they talk about their practice in the plural as they do here “we were driven” and “we tend to think back”. The interlocutor roles played out through the interview with each building on points made by the other, or by one being invited to indicate their stance on the point under discussion to confirm or refute it. The focus on research and their passion was evident from their student days, but their identity as educators is also very apparent. However, whilst their key concern was for their research project, these supervisors are also concerned about their students and the kind of experience they have. As academics they are both researchers and teachers, and in this sense they are clear about their commitment to student development. These

two concerns for them are clearly complementary. Their concern for the kind of learning environment and learning experience their students have, permeated the interview. Both supervisors were clearly focused on the quality of their supervision and the experience their students had.

The two supervisors acknowledged the increasing pressure in particular in terms of time, both for the student and for the supervisor. The greatest pressure arises out of the push for minimum time to completion, driven by the national and international trends. However they were adamant about facilitating a learning process for the student and it was clear that they embraced a more developmental approach and were resistant to pressure towards an instrumentalist approach. The tale and the way it was told with the individual concerns clearly emerging, was the reason for categorising these two as primarily academic researchers or traditional academics. These supervisors show their commitment to their research, as well as to their supervision. Thus whilst research is their prime interest they are clear that the other aspects related such as teaching and administration are also part of their identity and they take these seriously. They identify strongly with their disciplinary home. That research and teaching are closely connected since research projects are really made possible by the students engaging in their research projects. They are as Tabitha indicates “ *the hands*”.

Academia and their activities are very much part of these respondents’ identities, stretching into their home lives. It is part of their way of life. Their passion and their strong academic identity is reiterated through the interview. At one point they note:

Tab .. *we are just as busy as ...we ever were and just fits..it’s got to fit in. I mean I haven’t had a weekend off for how long?*

Tim *I don’t know*

Tab: *Probably two years two and a half years*

Tim: *Someone once used that term holiday I had to go and look it up in a dictionary (laugh)*

Tab: *You know that a lot of after-hours time goes into it*

We can see that their work is imbued with the values and beliefs that they attach to academic professionalism, as Castells would maintain, whilst the supervision tasks are partly a functional response to these and partly in response to professional needs (Castells, 2004). It is these values and beliefs that really shape their relationship with the students:

Tab: *I mean the students know they can phone us, they can phone us in the evenings look.. come round to the house because that is where I am today we have a good relationship with our students*

Tim: I have been known to jump in the car and drive to campus because a student had a problem with a piece of equipment ... you know if the equipment is not working and the data can't be collected then the whole thing falls down (T&T I 733 -740)

This could be seen as a dovetailing of concerns such as that Archer describes (Archer, 2012). In the picture it is clear that the process being followed is that familiar within science disciplines. It is part of the culture of science “...that’s the way the sciences operate...We’re not in the least bit different..”. Thus the process is reproduced through the activities of these researchers. Archer maintains “The interaction between ‘similar and familiar’ is its own course of normativity, one that endorses conventionalism and whose limited knowledge of alternatives effectively turns ‘that’s how things are done around here’ from being a description of habit into something normatively binding” (Archer, 2012 p. 21). The power/knowledge relationship located within the science frame which these researchers draw on reinforces the normative practices. It is this that informs the identity of the scientists and the relationship with their students.

The various elements all work together in harmony creating a contextual continuity which supports the communicative reflexivity, keeping things stable and coherent. What was apparent throughout the interview was the continual interaction with each respondent building on points made by the other, or interactions occurring between the two in response to either interview questions or to issues that had been raised in the discussion. In this way issues were clarified, checked, or changed.

Archer in her exploration of how individuals exercise agency through the application of the internal conversation outlines four different modes of reflexivity (2007, 2012). Whilst she explores this through current situations to home environments, this study only examines the work contexts and is thus limited in this regard. However it would seem that this particular case would reflect a communicative reflexivity at work in a career setting. Two academics who have a long standing working relationship, dedicated to their research work and the teaching that goes alongside it. They reflect a contextual continuity despite quite extensive changes within that system. This is what Rau describes as creativity that can occur within evolving structures, so that whilst there is change, it maintains the substantive structure and thus supplants reproduction (Rau, 2004). There was structural and cultural continuity within the disciplinary context. Whilst there are some contradictions developing, on the whole the system still works with high degrees of continuity, and their funding, and productivity provides a stable environment for them. Their practice has emerged through

the engagement with system and ongoing agency. The evolution of their own collaboration and co-supervision, their development of the need for focused concept papers prior to acceptance of students are examples of this. Engaging technologies of the self, they work to consolidate the process within the structures and system, becoming rated scientists, taking awards within the system, and confirming the cultural practices of their disciplinary positions.

Tabitha and Tim seemed to be clear examples of communicative reflexives, and their context supported and encouraged this. This might be expected of those we might designate traditional academics where they still feel comfortable in their environment. Perhaps the fact that they work in a discipline that falls closely within those with strong framing, bounded and with clear delineation means that working within it has been less challenged by broader changes within higher education.

9.5 Clashing with Rules and Regulations

Only one respondent seemed to fit Archer's description of someone displaying metareflexive tendencies (Archer, 2007a, 2012) and that was James. Metareflexives

...are 'loners' who seek to devote themselves to social relations; they are people for whom the most proximate social institution – their own family – is one from whose social bonds they seek to distance themselves; in short, they are critically detached from that part of the social order they know best yet dedicated to re-ordering the social through their vocational endeavours. (Archer, 2012 p.210)

9.5.1 James' Tale

James was an experienced researcher, who has worked at a number of universities. His experience covered universities overseas as well as in South Africa. He was interviewed in his office and since we did not quite conclude the process during the first interview he was the only participant who was interviewed twice since we ran out of time in the first one. His experience covered 25 years from the early 1980s. Drawing on only Masters and PhDs he estimated that he had supervised between 100 and 150 students in his career. He had worked in at least 4 different universities in different countries. He quite specifically took on an academic identity "*... I have always been an academic, I began as a tutor...*" (J1 I.2) which is consistent with the idea that many metareflexives tend towards a vocation rather than a career. Like Tabitha and Tim, this is a way of life for him. In one institution he was appointed to co-ordinate the postgraduate programme, in which there were a lot of foreign students. He estimated that in any year there were between 25 and 30 Masters students registered

on that programme. As co-ordinator he was responsible for administration, and some teaching as well as supervising the research. Supervising PhD students began in approximately 1990 and these were mostly students from overseas mainly from developing countries. In the current institution he had been appointed as an academic in one discipline, but also had an interest and was working in a newly emerging discipline. Of interest is the fact that the one discipline would in most instances provide a supportive base for neo-liberal undertakings whilst the other is very firmly located within the arena of civil movements and social justice. It was clear that he had several interests, and pursued different projects at different points in his life. In his current passion and discipline there is the strong commitment to social justice. He rather follows his own notions, confident in his experience and often critical of the general trends.

The trajectory of his own development shows how his practice has emerged in response to the experiences he has had. His description of his experiences shows a level of reflection about both his personal identity and academic engagement that is part of his decision making process. Throughout the interview he reflected on how his style and ideas about supervision have emerged over time, often noting his conversation with himself regarding different elements. He displays a high level of introspection in his contemplation of his activities and his own self-improvement. In Foucaultian terms reflection such as this is vital: "...this transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting?" (1988, p. 14). It also shows however, that as an academic he adopts a caring approach to teaching and his students as well as being involved in his research. As he comes to understand the personal or professional cost of such actions he reshapes his behaviour in a conversation with himself which he reports on.

The shift in approach is linked to the James' main concerns and focus of activity, his own research and academic activities. He maps the changes in his own activities over time. He shows a growing move towards making students more responsible for their own activities and research, whilst restricting the more peripheral supervisory activities. It becomes clear through the tale that he has come to recognise the costs of certain activities in relation to the bigger picture – in making choices around these he prioritises actions with respect to his own concerns. Thus in his example of initial supervision he indicates how much work he had to do, and how he recognised the cost to himself in relation to his other activities. Thus he changed his practice as he proceeded with supervision.

He classifies himself currently in teaching terms as a postgraduate teacher “ *I am a fully postgraduate operator now*” (J1 1.54). He notes that whilst the school within which he was currently working had a policy that everyone, especially senior staff, had to teach at first year level, and particularly since these were large classes, he has done this but doesn’t do it any longer. He agrees with this policy but indicates clearly that the constraints of his workload (especially his research work) do not allow for his further participation in that. In his position he may be able to negotiate this, other newer and less established staff may not be able to do this. His estimate was that he was at the time of the interview supervising 20 PhDs and 10 Masters students. Working with such numbers means a lot of reading of draft chapters and proposals. He notes the shift from formal teaching where the teacher has most of the control and responsibility for content and process, to supervision which he styles as joint learning. Given his position and experience he also has become more able to move and takes opportunities to move to areas where there is something that interests him. He is clear that he likes variety and pursues a range of different interests.

Given the nature of his kind of supervision, his own interests and the numbers of students he deals with he notes the emergence of different approaches to his supervision.

...I’m not going to correct all your English erm and they are hoping for or expecting that to be done you’ve got a problem so I do sort of make that known I mean the other thing is that a lot of my supervision too because I’ve got a lot of it I do its not group supervision but I do have the students the Masters students in [discipline] for example and [discipline 2] come for a week long dissertation writers school and I have a separate one for the PhD students so I don’t have to say things supervising 20 students I don’t have to say it 20 times I say it once there are many other advantages of having them come together it’s not merely to save me time but er yeah line of conversation is going so there’s quite some group work not just individual to individual... (J2 1.420-429)

In this he conforms to some of the ideal outlined in the student guides which indicate that a supervisor’s role is not to be an editor (Mouton, 2001). He is quick to point out that this has emerged from his own process not enforced through policy. He rather points to the limitations of policy in respect of guidance on how to work with students. Thus whilst he sets up a relationship of support with his students, he also delimits boundaries and borders to practice which pushes students towards greater autonomy. The combination of group and individual activities with students may enable working with larger numbers of students at this level.

Like several other respondents the importance of the educational aspect of supervising is reiterated. He indicates how the process contributes to his learning and keeping updated – also the rejuvenation and energising aspects.

Throughout his story he clearly indicates that his expertise has developed over time and through experience – both his own and through interaction with others, both supervisors, and students. As with other interviewees, it seems that experience serves to make the respondents more cautious, and careful, circumscribing their engagement with students for a range of reasons:

Yeah it's taken a long time to come to that I mean I feel I am quite experienced in these matters now and at age 62 I ought to be I think but it has taken a long time to er to come to it and I'm wary of taking on new students ... (J2 l.182-4)

Whilst the reluctance might be because of imminent retirement, he then went on to describe one or two students he was considering as possible candidates. In these descriptions the guiding factor was rather what the student brought to the process, and the significance of the project.

Whilst James was a member of quite a traditional discipline (discipline A)²⁰ within the institution, during his academic career he developed an interest in an area outside of the discipline within which he was working and he began to move to consolidate his interest in this new area:

so even though I'm paid to teach [discipline A] and I do quite a lot of it I supervise quite a lot in [discipline A] I spend most of my work in [discipline B] which is nothing to do with [discipline A] at all but it is where my passion and calling and life is and that [discipline B] programme also has a large dissertation component within a masters programme and now a lot of PhD students ... (J1 l.40-44).

He now works in both areas as he indicates, and can facilitate cross disciplinary movement. However, it did not seem that this happened much. It also seemed that he was one of very few working in his new area and as such he retained his position within his earlier discipline. This shows how he works to enable his primary concern and interest – within the new discipline. As part of this and to facilitate his activities he actively sought an academic position in a so-called developing country, or one where he would have relatively easy access to developing countries. Agentially he uses the one disciplinary base to pursue

²⁰ In talking about his academic disciplines these will be referred to by letters rather than name them since given his rather unusual circumstances it would be clear who this person was and anonymity would be compromised.

his other interest, developing discipline B. In particular it is his notion of passion that is really important here, that this is the driving force for the academic. It is something he looks for in his students as well.

Subjectively, he can draw on his status as an international scholar therefore highlighting his stance as expert, as well as tapping into other technologies of power such as research funding bodies, rating systems, student graduation rates, and efficiency in throughput to engage in activities of interest. His power/knowledge networks place him in a powerful position within the institution from the perspective of an individual since he makes a substantial contribution in a number of areas. This then allows him to pursue many of his own projects.

As a supervisor his relationship with students indicates an interesting power dynamic. The power/knowledge nexus that informs his institutional status may also affect the relationship that his students have with him. Students may wish to draw upon his status and expertise. In all these instances his subjective stance is that of expert. In part this informs his subjective stance as supervisor where in several instances he is quite directive creating quite a strongly hierarchical relationship, in which students may have little room for manoeuvrability. So in terms of setting up the project and in the initial phases students have to have a strong proposal, with well articulated data collection methods before they are allowed to proceed. Thus once settled students are granted a fair degree of freedom to develop and proceed with their research. This interesting balance of style is important for supervisors and showing why close focus on style may be misleading in terms of identity.

Through his tale, he reflected ongoing dialogues with himself in relation to the activities he was engaged in, and the interests that he was pursuing. It is clear given his movements through the system, across countries that he is proactive in following where his developing interests and concerns are best likely to be served. His concern with research and new disciplinary interests appear to be the focus for this. He sees himself as the traditional academic, but embracing of new elements and adaptable to new situations. This and the constant but individual interlocution seems to mark him as a meta-reflexive.

9.6 Conclusion

In this chapter attention was turned to academic identity issues, as these were revealed through the different tales. These emerged through the various discourses the participants engaged in their tales, and whilst much was outlined in the earlier chapter discussing the enablements and constraints that individuals encountered, here there was an opportunity to highlight one or two features that may not have been emphasized in the earlier discussion. As such these are more tentative findings and could be engaged with in much greater depth, and expanded beyond what is revealed through the specific role of supervision. Whilst it was not the intention to use Archer's framework of the Inner Conversation to any great extent in the analysis where this became relevant it was taken into consideration because it also provided a useful reflection on the way supervision was experienced by particular individuals and extended insights into these.

As identities are continually constructed they emerge and are responsive to the context within which they occur. As individuals position themselves, guided by their interests as well as by the constraints and opportunities within their specific contexts identity evolve. Thus for some of these respondents taking up not only the role of supervisor, but also other roles such as examiner, or committee member, researcher or project manager means that these work synergistically to affect individual academic identity. In this process of expansion they become quite powerful custodians of knowledge. However their positions within specific disciplines and departments may also affect their status, and in this the context can be quite significant in identity development. They may be positioned less powerfully if their departments are small, or the discipline is one that is less valued in the current instrumental and economic climate. Those in marginal positions may have fewer opportunities, and work in more constrained ways. In this study the data reflects the embedded everyday lives of individuals and how identities are reflected, something which as Henkel points out is often ignored in more abstract discussions (Henkel, 2000). Drawing on notions of academic life, that of teaching, research and administration we can see that these individuals worked with all, prioritising some over others in relation to their own interests, in others finding that constraining circumstances might affect their own sense of self. Their engagement with structures and culture within and beyond the institutions enabled them to work against those constraints that affected them most. Thus Theo was finding that developing connections beyond the institution expanded his control of knowledge, and created networks that enhanced his academic identity. James was able to resist some institutional demands because of his international status, as well as his capacity to

supervise. He drew on quite consciously on his identity as academic researcher, and on his membership of disciplines to maintain his sense of values.

What was clear was that disciplines largely were still a key source of identity, and that as custodians and gatekeepers of disciplinary knowledge supervisors were recognised as practitioners in their field. Most of the respondents projected a strong disciplinary identity, along with other valued aspects. However, it was also clear that academic positioning was changing, they were less able to determine and control the processes related to their practice, factors beyond them impinged and affected not only their practice but their context as well. In this they faced challenges to their identities.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

In literature and in life we ultimately pursue, not
conclusions, but beginnings.

Sam Tanenhaus

In concluding this study chapter ten will provide an overview of the process, mentioning the studies upon which this research builds and the way this research is shaped by a particular world view, and theoretical underpinnings. It will draw together the threads of the discussion of the findings to highlight the response to the key questions of how supervisors experience the process, and why this should be important. And as confirmation of Tanenhaus' notion of beginnings it will then explore how such might be responded to going forward and the insights that I have gained.

10.1 Introduction

Whilst much of the literature focuses on the student experience of postgraduate supervision, or on relationship issues, there are some areas that have been rather underserved in the research. In particular one example may be the way supervisors experience the process, not simply from the perspective of the dyadic relationship, but also from the perspective of their position as academic within higher education. Nor have issues of structure, culture and agency within supervision been the focus of much discussion or research. Whilst the effects of global or local policies within the postgraduate sector have received attention the effects of these within the supervisory space has only received limited exposure. Such sparse coverage means that research in this area is somewhat limited, and that understanding may be enriched by more work in these areas.

This study set out to explore supervisors' experiences of postgraduate supervision, in particular to see how in embodying the role they were responding to the academic contexts within which they found themselves and their response in relation to their own academic identities. In the complex higher education environments different structural and cultural elements might be either enabling, helping individuals to achieve that which they strive towards, or constraining, preventing or slowing down progress. In taking up this academic role supervisors in this study negotiated what for them were various obstacles or identified opportunities and this revealed insights into their own professional (and sometimes personal) interests as these also related to their academic development (or as Archer (2003) indicates, their emergent project or ultimate concern). Through this process of agency they provided insights which although individual and personal, might help us

gain a greater understanding of processes and interactions within postgraduate supervision occurs and how context might affect the practice. It also highlights moments of elaboration or stasis with regard to the role. Through the different individual narratives I achieved my goal of gaining a deeper understanding of supervisory practices, of how the interests, values and broader academic identity of each individual as well as the context within which they operated affected their varied practice. It became clear that individuals responded to particular structural or cultural aspects of their environments differently, and they exercised agency in relation to what they identified as opportunities or constraints, using their own personal emergent powers in relation to what furthered their own ultimate concerns. Nevertheless, they were not always free to proceed entirely as they liked, elements of the context were already pre-given. This interplay between parts and people was illuminating and contributes to greater understanding of the process.

10.2 Overview of the research process

The exploration of individual academic experiences of supervision across a range of disciplines, and between novice and experienced supervisors, was done adopting a critical realist stance.

Recognising that various mechanisms, both structural and cultural at the level of the Real have particular and sometimes different effects at the levels of the Actual and the Empirical, data was gathered and analysed in the hopes of exploring some of those mechanisms. Through engaging Margaret Archer's social theory of morphogenesis it was possible to look closely at different elements in the various relationships. Archer's position that people are neither 'cultural dopes' nor 'structural dupes' resonated with my own position, as did the notion that despite this, people did not have completely free reign to do as they pleased but certainly had some possibility to influence the situations they found themselves in. Thus it was that in examining the interface between the people and parts that insight was gained, hopefully moving beyond the immediate and obvious explanations to more complex ones. Chapters two, and three provided an exploration of the ontological and theoretical underpinnings of the study thus indicating the lenses that could be used in viewing the data. This allowed an exploration of different configurations of factors affecting individuals and the supervisory role. It was hoped that by coming to a deeper understanding of a critical realist world view that it would assist in some of the questioning of supervisory approaches and outcomes. Using Margaret Archer's notions of morphostasis and morphogenesis, as well as agency and the inner conversation incidences, feelings and explanations were examined to see if a clearer understanding of how individuals using their own personal powers engaged different

structures and cultures. Thus the way mechanisms, either structural or cultural constrained or enabled activities led to the consolidation or the emergence of supervisory practices were explored.

In particular Bhaskar's notion of ontological levels proved to be a particularly useful device, and in his words the 'underlabourer' when it came to exploring the mechanisms, both structural and cultural, which the respondents confronted and engaged with. The model developed by Brante (2001b) which extended the idea of the levels was useful, allowing an exploration of mechanisms across a range of differentiations showing how pervasive some mechanisms can be, and the variety of forms that they can take. It especially showed how mechanisms at broad international and national levels, or how inter-institutional mechanisms, then cascade down in varied ways to the individual level. Where they work across and between levels forming networks which are complementary, mechanisms become particularly powerful. An example of this is the mechanism of finance in the arena of higher education (as well as other interconnecting social areas). When however they come into contestation with other mechanisms and contradictions become apparent, particularly with other networks, it may be easier to challenge them. Individuals also work in relationships with one another, often becoming social agents as a group. These too may be powerful in consolidating or challenging mechanisms. However, it is clear that individuals also find unique and often specific means to engage mechanisms, in particular Tabitha and Tim, and James in this study show innovative ways of engaging mechanisms. Thus the second goal of drawing on theoretical discussion of why these supervisors act so rather than otherwise (Archer, 2003) was achieved and an exploration of some of the deeper less apparent reasons for activities occurred. The interplay between different elements is important in exploring the way in which various factors relate in particular supervisory situations. The different configurations of factors that affect the role become clear through ongoing comparison of different examples. It is not as if individuals act alone, but in a relationship with the structural and cultural aspects. Differences become apparent as individual identities find different opportunities and constraints within their environments, and as they pursue different concerns and projects. Newer members of academia found that they entered the space as primary agents and therefore had fewer collectives that as members provided them with leverage. They were still, despite qualifications, posts and entry into the institution as a member of both a discipline and department, peripheral members (Lave & Wenger, 1991). More experienced supervisors as established members of the discipline, department and institution had many more groups that provided them with different forms of power. Their networks extended beyond the institution to funding bodies and to other groups and institutions both national and international,

and such membership provided greater access to resources, and allowed for wider potential for their own personal and professional concerns.

Having provided a broad background into trends within higher education, and the way higher education is responding to globalisation, and to developments in the knowledge domain as well as motivations for the study in the early chapters, chapter four explored how the postgraduate sector has been dealt with in the literature. The effects of globalising trends, and the strengthening neo-liberal ideologies governing international and national developments, on the higher education sector have been documented by numerous academics. Scholars such as Trowler and Knight (2000a), Molesworth et al (Molesworth et al., 2009), and Barnett (Barnett, 2000, 2011, 2012) along with others provide a picture of a changing higher education sector. Others such as Nerad (Nerad, 2006), Wisker et al (Wisker et al., 2007), Grant (Grant, 2003, 2005), Manathunga (2005), Bitzer (2012), Harrison (2010) and Clegg (2013) along with a myriad of others explored the postgraduate sector and how it is changing, and the effects that the changes are having. As such this is complemented by the reports such as in the local context, the Crest report (Council on Higher Education, 2009), or the ASSAF study (2010) and policy documents in the form of White Papers that reflect much of this in local situations and which provide useful material for bodies and governments to put pressure on institutions and individuals to move in particular directions. Mechanisms affecting the sector are noted by the likes of Bitzer (2010) and Koen (2007) in their studies. The emergence of funding as a force in the postgraduate sector reflects in a variety of ways not least of which are national funding formulae for higher education, and the way higher education is funded more generally all leading to greater pressure for throughput and time to completion. This works also in relation to the different ways students access funding, and these affect how they behave. Thus the interconnectedness of the different levels Brante (2001b) becomes clearer when exploring aspects at the level of the Actual or Empirical.

In the burgeoning literature that is emerging focused on postgraduate issues, by far the greatest emphasis is on the supervision process and relationship. In particular much of the literature focuses on how the student experiences the process, how their interaction with the supervisor influences the process, issues related to feedback, and issues of identity along with other aspects. Different forms of supervision, various styles that supervisors adopt as well as the trends and issues related to throughput and achievement are documented. The motivations, feelings and constraints that students face have been investigated. Predominant in this is study of the PhD level, with minimal focus on Masters or Honours levels. There is much less however that explores the experiences of

supervisors, their motivation, the factors that affect them and their practice, how they make decisions or other issues. It is in this area that this study hopes to have made a contribution exploring not just the experience of the individuals but also examining the context as they perceive it. The belief is that understanding the experiences of supervisors can help to improve broader understanding of the supervision process itself. Individual supervisors were encouraged to tell the story of themselves as supervisors. Through their tales a picture of each one emerged, their choices of action, their use of discourse sketched their different identities that shaped, and were shaped by, their academic environments, as well as by their own interests and concerns. For some, their actions and espousals consolidated and extended the current practices especially where these aligned to other aspects of their academic identity, whilst for others they found ways to circumvent, or to highlight, the contradictions in the system. Since the tales spanned time and experience some emergent constraints and enablements, as well as practices were described. In asking why these practices there was an attempt to discover why postgraduate supervision occurs this way rather than in other ways.

Supervision, as shown here, is a complex process encompassing individual relationships, power dynamics, institutional politics and national as well as international agendas. It occurs differently in different academic spaces. However, despite this and the effects that it has on roles it is individuals and the way they take up the role that allows for difference and change at the level of the Actual. How they do this depends, in part, on their own interests as academics as well as their placement and status within their contexts.

Given the concern over the way students experience the process, and the concern with time to completion and the throughput rates, research to date has, in particular, focused on students and their perspectives. However, in exploring factors that affect the supervision process, it became clear that it was not just the external factors that were important but also the motivations of the academics taking on the role of supervisor and how they take up this role as part of their broader academic activities. Their life projects and interests affect how they embody their roles, imbued with their values within the particular context they find themselves in, national or institutional. It became clear that the context provided important possibilities – or constraints and which affect the process. These shape the reflective interactions of individuals that occur despite proclivities towards particular reflective modes. Some structures affected most of the respondents, but their experiences were not necessarily all the same and the way in which they engaged the structures differed. The priorities of each may well have affected their style and approach, as well as their focus and the

ways in which they encountered the mechanisms. Thus the kind of academic identity that they shaped was guided by their own emerging projects which were further enabled or constrained by the structures and culture within which they found themselves. However, in this group whatever their driving force, one feature was clear that most were very committed to their students.

In theorising postgraduate supervision it is claimed that supervisory practices and relationships are affected by the way supervisors experience and enact supervision. In interaction with a variety of Higher Education structures and cultures individuals exercise their agency in ways that may adapt or consolidate practices. Given the pivotal role that supervisors play within the process of developing postgraduate students, understandings of how and why individuals exercise their agency provide insights into what may work optimally. It is the exploration of how supervisors engage agentially with the structures and cultures operative in the higher education sphere in which this study makes a contribution to knowledge.

The requirement for supervisors in higher education means that induction into and support in the role for individuals is important. This raises a series of questions: how this can be done? What is the most effective and/or productive means for offering this? How can it be done efficiently whilst taking into consideration the tension between generic input and context specific guidance? What is the basis for this support, is it compliance or is it critical engagement? The efficacy of collaboration and co-operation came to the fore in the responses. This is consistent with the literature. Other activities such as courses and workshops maybe helpful but a process of mentoring (and possibly co supervision) and an ethos in which peer conversations occur around issues of teaching and learning would provide an environment which would not only support entrants into the role, but also more long standing role incumbents. In this way there is a contribution to a learning organisation, where sharing of expertise and ongoing development work together. The need for both focused input, and sharing across boundaries could also be addressed. This provides a flexible process which allows for both socialisation and the development of new processes.

10.3 Summary of findings

As academics take up the role of supervisor amongst their many other professional roles, they enter into a situation that is already made, there are rules, traditions and practices that are expected and each new incumbent engages these differently. The experience of these supervisors within one institutional context spanned a 30 year period, and a variety of disciplinary environments, thus a number of changes became apparent, and responses reflected how individuals engaged the

changing milieu but also indicated how specific aspects of their placement provoked particular reactions. It became clear that their own professional interests and concerns, as well as their placements played a part in the way they engaged, the choices that they made and how this reflected through the way in which they embodied their role, and how this changed over time. In the initial phases taking on the role was a challenge and incumbents noted their novice position. Almost all of the respondents noted anxiety when taking on the role, reflecting to different degrees, a lack of confidence in the encounter with new situations. As in many unstructured professional situations in these early phases individuals were destabilised, especially in the face of what they identified as a lack of support. Discipline expertise it seemed was only one facet of the process and the incumbents recognised this. It is precisely the lack of experience with supervision as a practice given the hugely varied nature of the task and the interactants, as well ambiguity in expectations, that creates anxiety and tension for novice supervisors as they take up their roles. Generally, they fell into the category of primary agents, thus unable to draw on many sources of power with which to effect much change. Issues of level, of developing relationships, of the range of the field along with other aspects challenged individuals. Many saw the lack of structure as a constraint, but it also often allowed individuals to exercise agency. Pushed to make decisions and choices some found creative ways to work in their space in pursuance of their projects. Individuals like Tabitha and Tim using their interest in developing themselves as researchers, and their penchant for working in communicative interaction, developed their own supportive process. James, in more meta-reflexive mode, reflected on his processes and made changes whilst critically engaging the processes. Others were more autonomous in their approach. Thus the process of identifying enabling and constraining aspects may not be so straightforward and clear cut. It may be affected by perception and by time, what in one moment may be a constraint, further along and on reflection, may become an enablement. It may be the very constraint that created the environment or motivation for a particular response. Since these structures were particular to a specific context, and to specific incidents (ie: situationally contingent) the usefulness of comparing experiences over time and between situations deepens our understandings of the process, allowing for the recognition of patterns but also elements that create diversity and divergence.

The importance of support in these early phases of role became apparent in these interviews. Some kind of socialisation process both into the role, and to institutional needs could make a significant difference, and could facilitate professional development. What became clear was the value placed on community, which points towards the importance of a more collegial academic space where exchanges, and discussions may occur both formally and informally. There are a range of

possibilities, mentoring, co- or team supervision, supervision forums, formal courses or workshops around supervision which would provide some support for supervisors, both in the early phases, as well as for those more experienced. The exchange between the novices and the more practiced supervisors was indicated to be of great importance. Even more apparent was the reciprocal potential for such exchanges. The danger is always to consider it is the novice who requires “development” however, and the importance of ongoing reflection and enhancement would ensure ongoing support for all in such multifaceted processes. This fits well with notions of life-long learning. Given the desire to develop capacity, one effective measure might be to develop an ethos of discussion through a variety of mechanisms. Seeing structures such as higher degrees committees as more than just administrative processes, but also as educative ones may be a particularly efficient way to use these elements.

In earlier time individuals felt unsupported in a space which was relatively unconstrained by policy or guidelines and support structures, since in such situations not only are there fewer mechanisms which constrain individual activity, but it also allows greater variability within the contexts. More recently, however, structural changes through the introduction of policies have begun to be initiated, and mentoring and training courses have been put in place ostensibly to provide support. However, in an environment of increasing workloads and performance demands it may be that these are just seen as additional burdens rather than supportive. There is an increasing structural shift from an environment of greater flexibility where individuals were able to make their own choices from a wider range of opportunities, to one which is more structurally restricted by rules. Newly emergent environments which are much more policy constrained, governed by rules and regulations and an atmosphere of surveillance and blame may exacerbate this. Discourses of accountability and efficiency complement this. However, these may sit uncomfortably with the more traditional discourses and ethos higher education practitioners are familiar with. Several respondents noted this in relation to both their activities and possibilities and those of their students. What became clear was that it was not necessarily the mechanisms themselves that were enablements or constraints, but rather how they were perceived and responded, or how they were taken up and used by different actors. This is an aspect of the social realist framework that is perhaps less elucidated, the way in which mechanisms may be instantiated as opposed to encountered. This difference seems to encapsulate a difficulty and danger in writing about mechanisms as if they had inherent properties often in a dualistic sense. So, for example, a policy may be implemented in a way which might be supportive or punitive, and it may be encountered

(separately from the implementation) in different ways. This was an aspect that was under developed within the social realist framing, and still requires some consideration.

The ideal supervisor as described in the literature, and as propounded in texts which set out to guide students in how to choose their supervisors, is someone who is experienced, highly expert in their field (which is defined by research active and well published) (Delamont et al., 2004; Hart, 2005; James & Baldwin, 1999; Mouton, 2001; na, 2009) , yet without any reference to teaching ability. This draws on the well-established academic discourse of 'expertise' and 'experience' in which much of the discussion related to supervision is embedded and which in itself is a powerful cultural mechanism. What emerged through discussion with the respondents is that these are very flexible concepts in practice and that these notions are challenged by other practices thus highlighting contradictions. Several respondents, diverging from ideas of expertise, talked about supervising 'outside their field', sometimes this was cross faculty, although in other instances it was perhaps only just reaching beyond specific topic areas. It was often expedient for disciplines for a variety of reasons to allow this extended aspect to supervision. Such activity was seen by most of the respondents as stimulating, generative and a rich learning possibility, although as academics became more established, and more involved in their own research, and developing their own profiles, the practice diminished as it was too labour intensive. The practice initially occurred across the time span, described by both the more experienced academics and the newly inducted, although policy was making this practice less prevalent or possible. Despite the emphasis on qualification, moving beyond one's area of expertise may however come back into practice in this institution (despite guideline statements to the contrary) but in less favourable circumstances, this as a result of the mandated numbers of postgraduate students per year for each individual. Thus emergent structures are influencing practice and perhaps not always in foreseen ways.

Less impromptu and idiosyncratic, and more systematic have been the emerging trends related to expectations of early career academics to become supervisors. This is connected to a variety of different mechanisms working in tandem across various levels, institutional, national and international and again reflects in interesting ways on the discourse of expertise and experience. The emergent practices of 'pushing' PhD study, of encouraging students and academics to complete their postgraduate studies early in their career, and of expecting new graduates to become supervisors, are in themselves contradictions of the notions of 'experience' and 'expertise'. Within this particular context these practices are being pursued with vigour. Several respondents noted that 'one size does not fit all', and with the changing nature of the sector students are being pushed into

their postgraduate studies, and PhDs in particular, earlier and earlier. On completion of these degrees they are being expected to then take on students to supervise. This may be very early, not only in their academic career, but also in their research career. Both expertise and experience are fundamentally time related concepts, so the earlier such roles are taken up, or the younger the age of conferral of the degrees, the greater the contradiction of the notions. It is clear that young academics would not have the research experience, or have been 'research active' for very long, or even have had the time to publish in appropriate journals yet they are being pushed into service very soon after graduation. This has raised a host of issues related to the quality of postgraduate degrees, the depth and relevance of knowledge along with others. Mechanisms which drive these emergent practices are firstly the neoliberal insistence that innovation drives society and economics, that national innovation is founded on high level education and in particular on the number of PhDs a particular nation has (ie: there is a causal relation between PhDs and innovation). This is embodied in the emergent discourse about too few PhDs being produced and that this is a particular problem for developing nations. So we need more supervisors (which we lack) thus rapid increase in numbers, and thus also these new graduates must begin supervising as soon as possible. Secondly, there is an emergent discourse which builds a picture of an aging academia, and therefore there is a rush to prepare the next generation and to have them practicing as quickly as possible. However, we know that this can be artificially induced through creating early retirement ages – if retirement is enforced at 55 or 60 you have a much greater "aging" academia than if you enforce retirement at 65, 75 or 80, or if you do not have a retirement age. Equally, staffing structures which created a flow through different rankings, with older staff taking on lighter loads in different kinds of posts, becoming mentors and supervisors rather than full practicing academics would prevent bottlenecks but seemingly have been put into place only partially. Tim and Tabitha are an example of this, they have remained on after retirement as Emeritus professors. These new practices challenge the notion of supervisor as expert, and as experienced researcher.

Thus, whilst the discourse relating to supervisors still embraces and endorses the notion of experience and expertise new mechanisms, emerging as a result of international neoliberal ideologies, have seen a shift to a valuing of credentials. The discourses of 'efficiency' and 'productivity' are becoming predominant in the sector. Time to completion (consistently insistent on narrower time frames despite research indicating problems here), and throughput discourses and structures pressurise both staff and students. Thus documents and studies which recommend increasing the numbers of PhDs linking this to national and even the international economic good are used as levers to implement structures such as policies and practices that are changing cultural

aspects of the institutions as well as the sector. Contradictions are exposed through the discourses and practices, highlighting anomalies and creating tensions. Those who prioritise student well-being and development are often prepared to resist these processes. The supervisors here showed a deep commitment to their students, and to their well-being even in the face of policies which might negatively affect them. This was one emergent node of resistance.

Another set of traditional discourses which complement those of 'experience' and 'expertise', and which are seen as fundamental to academia are those of 'academic freedom' and 'autonomy'. These reflect the idea that academics as professionals should be free to make choices about their teaching and research, and is also linked closely to the notion of critical inquiry, critical thinking and critical social engagement. Different aspects of this discourse were drawn upon through the speech choices of several of the respondents, and were definitely embraced by one or two of the more experienced supervisors. They noted challenges to 'academic freedom' and to substantive quality, linking this to the difference between training and education. Ironically emergent discourses of 'accountability', 'quality' and 'efficiency' which should be positive attributes, in current usage linked as they are to driving instrumentalist forces, highlight productivity along with other aspects are more punitive raising a host of negative associations. In relation to 'academic freedom' and 'autonomy' these emergent discourses bring many contradictions to the fore, and come with a panoply of structures such as audits, performance management, and tight time boundaries which are projected as limiting. These technologies of power and surveillance were shown as emergent through the tales. As Fairclough notes that through discourses different possible practices maybe imagined and these may become more powerful when they more structurally implemented as in this case.

These imaginaries may be operationalized as actual (networks of) practices – imagined activities, subjects, social relations etc can become real activities, subjects, social relations etc. Operationalization includes materialization of discourses – economic discourses become materialized for instance in the instruments of economic production...(Fairclough, 2006 np)

A new range of structures which 'materialize' the emergent discourses such as policies on 'talent management', indicators for 'performance' and by counting publications and other measurables through 'productivity units' are beginning to impinge on 'academic freedom' and most particularly on 'autonomy'. These indicate a shift in control over the process to the centre and away from individual academics and even their disciplines. The implementation of training programmes, whilst potentially useful really did not feature in individual discussions. In some instances, notably with the

more established academics there was resistance to the notion of training, at least for themselves, in particular because it challenged their expertise and autonomy. Dependent on the way courses are implemented they can be seen as supportive and generative, or they might be seen as promoting a more standardised process, seeking for greater compliance and conformity. The pressures are to 'walk the path' to conform to 'requirements'. The descriptions rather reflected on the lonely nature of becoming a supervisor, with a lack of support for such a multifaceted situation, and how that provoked anxiety. Nevertheless, in such a situation, and where it was less structured, individuals were pushed into agentic situations, needing to make decisions in relation to the situations they found themselves in. Most fell back upon their own student experience of supervision, highlighting how important the quality of these student experiences is. It also became clear that there were a variety of opportunities or resources available in the more flexible environment. It is notable though that there is little acknowledgement in policy or other structures that supervision skills (like real learning) are developed over time, and are in many senses always responsive to the particular instance of practice. It is this that makes the novice expert frameworks so apt. Some respondents moved beyond their student experiences and explored alternative sources of support. Co-supervision and mentoring to some extent provided learning opportunities for some but the varied experiences exposed how differently these structures were implemented and taken up. In many ways the supervisor experience mirrors that of the postgraduate students themselves.

The experience of supervising was seen as a rich resource for these individuals for all aspects of their academic practice. The respondents learnt through drawing on their own personal previous student experience, and engaging other mechanisms, from co-supervisors and mentors, but they also found that the process was a source of learning for their other academic endeavours, ensuring that they kept up-to-date with their reading, research, as well as learning new aspects as student explored different areas in different ways. Within the experience there was an element of renewal, regeneration and stimulation which was both motivating and confidence building. As they learnt so their own practice changed, new practices occurred and traditional practices were often consolidated. These were points where change might occur – different kinds of structures could emerge like cohorts, or old ones might be confirmed like students working in research teams. Newer structures such as courses were mentioned briefly but did not feature much, and in some instances were actively resisted or seen as a constraint.

Students were identified as both an enablement and a constraint in a variety of different ways. It was important to have students to supervise (and in science to be able to engage in research

projects) yet certainly in initial phases they could be difficult to find. However, in the new dispensation within this particular institution each academic at a particular level and above were expected to supervise a minimum number of students at different postgraduate levels and this had a variety of effects. The calibre and ability, along with motivation, of the student was seen as an important factor in influencing the process. Being able to provide adequate support could be curtailed by institutional fiat (as in the case of coursework), or in terms of resources. Funding directly affected students and their activities, as well as supervisors.

What was emergent was that there was a much greater assertion of institutional authority, and a concomitant diminution of disciplinary and individual power. This too tends to challenge the notion of expertise, since disciplinary focus tends to be dissipated. Whereas many academics feel allegiance to their disciplines, as for example James does, their allegiance is then generally lesser in relation to institutions as research has shown (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler & Knight, 2000a). The pressure that disciplines are under in the emergent system was clear in some of the responses, and this affected supervisory practices and experience. New fields of study were struggling to establish themselves and that affected practitioners and their supervision, other disciplines like the performing arts or languages are under threat not just within the institution but also societally and that introduced constraints in a variety of forms. These disciplinary dynamics affected practice, their resources, abilities to raise funds and their ability to attract and retain students especially in the numbers being demanded and academics were very conscious of this. There were particular structural aspects which supervisors confronted in their practice as a result of the way their disciplines or departments were placed either institutionally or in a broader context.

Just as institutional factors relating to the discipline or department affected the process, so did disciplinary cultures. In science it is more likely that postgraduate students would have the experience of advising junior students in the laboratory at least, or interacting with those also engaged in the project which would provide some guidance when they become supervisors themselves although this was only tangentially raised by some interviewees as part of their experience. This would act as a kind of apprenticeship process where the participants simply learn by doing (again drawing on their own experience of process with their supervisors) since there is unlikely to be any formal induction (or even much spelling out of the role), no explanation of the process nor any reflection on the experience. For others the experience is not one of developing a team, but rather of working with individual students on the topic of their choice and is a much more lonely process.

The effects of increasing bureaucracy, and the technologies of administration, monitoring, tracking and surveillance were seen by the respondents as placing a great burden on both supervisors and students. It was changing the way both groups behaved, it affected student engagement and focus, as well as who supervisors would accept and promote. As the costs increase for supervisors so they became more selective. It was seen to directly impact 'academic freedom', and to narrow the educational experiences for students. Finally, it was felt to diminish 'real' education and learning and to encourage greater instrumentalism, and superficiality. This highlighted the tension between the 'education' discourse which was that of development, growth, caring and engagement and that of 'training' which was more about productivity, qualification (credentialing), compliance, efficiency and time to completion. There was concern that this shift diminished the potential for cognitive development, and developing curiosity driven research. In the longer term this would affect the kind of knowledge as well as the kinds of researchers that would be produced.

These concerns, whilst raised only in passing were important indicators of deep-seated changes in the academic milieu. It was the more long standing academics, those who saw themselves as traditional academics such as Tim and Tabitha, and James who felt these concerns most keenly along with those who were passionate about the development of their discipline like Shandy, or others especially focused on teaching and learning like Julia and Paulina. Some like Paul and Priya were more focused on institutional requirements and needs, and what it would take to climb the academic ladder, moving through the hierarchy and could see opportunities arising in the emerging dispensation. Some of the newer academics like Theo, found the changes exciting, and were ready to embrace some of the opportunities offered by extended partnerships, the new instrumentality and applied aspects of research. As each moved to consolidate their interests and concerns these guided their activities and choices in relation to how they embraced their supervisory role. When the process or activities became too costly for individuals they changed their ways of operating making particular decisions. The insights gathered in the exploration of these elements may indeed add more to our understanding of supervision, and the way supervisors engage, what they prioritise. In coming to this better understanding, and especially of the broader forces affecting the process and how these operate at different levels, institutional, inter-institutional, personal and interpersonal as well as at the levels of the Real, Actual and Empirical it may assist the different participants in the process, from institution, to departments, supervisors and students to make more informed decisions. By understanding these complex dynamics within the area of practice it exposes

the range of choices, opportunities and limitations, as well as the historical dimensions within which activities happen.

It may be that newer staff may be less exposed to the more traditional academic discourses, and be familiar with the increasingly pervasive marketised discourses which style students as consumers or customers, academics as workers and administrators as line managers and bosses. They may therefore substantially internalise a different set of values, and be unaware of some of the possibilities that have been available to older members. This may account for a greater drive towards diminishing the power of the older more established academics and professoriate through restructured senates and institutional structures.

The structures within institutions themselves were seen as enablers or constraints, and again the issue of how structures were instantiated clearly affected how they impacted in the environment. So in some instances structures, like the higher degrees committees could be helpful or not, or the formalised procedures to ensure ethics were more problematic for most. Once again this pointed to the fact that the structures themselves affected people through the way they were instantiated, as well as how individuals responded to them. Institutions and the processes that they put in place are influenced by the growing competition in the sector. The institutional identity and the placement within the national system affects institutional behaviour. Aggressive styling as a research institution affects a number of policies, and the pursuance of a place on the league tables, to be high in international rankings at whatever cost is evident in a range of emergent policies. In particular the chasing of numbers in relation to postgraduate graduations, qualifications and publications was beginning to affect individual staff and students in a variety of ways. The tightening up through rules and regulations, pressure for precise time lines along with others were aspects that influenced practice. As Tim noted there was less room for exploration, curiosity and a drive for a more narrowly focused throughput. The influence of national agendas through the CHE and the HEQC manifest in particular in the audits and the concomitant policy explosion in institutions was clear, although not as obvious as the influence of the new national funding formula and national research funding policies.

10.4 Implications

Whilst there were a number of similarities in the ways the participants in this study experienced supervision, each brought to the process their own interests and concerns. The elements that they

emphasized related very much to these concerns, and to their own modes of reflection. In each instance the pressures brought to bear through the international mechanisms, national mechanisms and even institutional mechanisms were instanced differently at the level of the Actual within the varied contexts and responded to differently by role incumbents as they embodied the role drawing on their own often limited understandings, knowledge and interests.

The Critical Realist assertion that mechanisms only become apparent when operationalised, but in fact may remain dormant and therefore undetectable was manifest through the discussions. This was also evident in relation to the notion that mechanisms may be engaged differently in different circumstances and by different groups and individuals. It is this that supports Archer's contention that it is important to explore the interface between the parts and the people in order to fully understand particular social activities. It is also this that supports her contention that agency is a powerful force in social situations ensuring that activities are not purely pre-determined, but also shows how historical aspects, time and social and cultural structures also mean that individuals and groups are not entirely free to act in a completely unrestrained manner. This is particularly important in educational research which is largely social in nature, and especially in relation to pedagogies at various levels including that at postgraduate level. Supervision has been depicted in the literature as generally relationship based, although in more neo-liberal spaces it may be becoming more like a business transaction. However, given the links between the personal, emotional and cognitive aspects in any learning situation it is unlikely that pedagogical aspects will ever be able to ignore what individuals and groups bring to the interaction. Whilst generally the morphogenetic framework links to individuals and to groups and the changes that can occur in interaction with culture and structure, what is less easy to explore maybe a multiple interface between mechanisms and individuals or groups occupying different roles as they come together. In this instance the interface explored was that of supervisor and the structures and cultures they engaged, but this could be extended to explore the interface between supervisor, student and the mechanisms in a more complex exchange.

Lee and Green (1995 p.44) indicated that "...the lived, experiential relations of postgraduate research and training [is important] in the larger project of understanding and theorising postgraduate pedagogy". The supervision process, whilst it is often portrayed as relational, is often described too narrowly. If the focus remains only on the participants in the process, with an occasional gesture towards the broader context then much may be missed when it comes to explaining it. Whilst the context is important, and the student experience is highlighted, the role of

the supervisor is constantly acknowledged as pivotal. Thus to understand the full range of that experience, which not only includes the dyadic relationship, but covers the supervisor's motivations, ambitions and broader identity as an academic is important. These affect the way the encounter occurs. The way they are positioned, how they position their students, the role that supervision plays in their own academic trajectory affects the way individuals enact their supervisory function.

This study has hopefully highlighted that what supervisors bring with them, and provided a glimpse of how the way they take up the role of supervisor has a significant effect on how the process occurs. The interpretation of the role is strongly influenced by the evolving academic identity of the role incumbents. As they engage with the existing structures and cultures, and identify enablements and constraints they adopt and adapt their practices. These may be affected by disciplinary practices, or occur only at an individual level. Issues around the kind of education that is being achieved, the effects of a greater emphasis on numbers and time on institutions, disciplines and supervision are raised, as well as the effects on students and their learning. Despite the emergent pressure and a variety of individual concerns there was overall a clear care for and commitment to the students and the real quality of their learning and experience. Some concern about the types of graduates being produced as a consequence of emergent policy was raised. These echoed concerns raised by theorists like Wheelahan (Wheelahan, 2007b; Wheelahan, 2010; Wheelahan, 2014) and Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2009) amongst others in some of the responses.

There is clear concern by practitioners with the shift towards greater instrumentalism. The neo-liberal ideology, supported by the financial mechanisms affecting governments, and institutions affect the postgraduate sector significantly and the result is noted by the respondents. They see a shift towards a greater technicist engagement, exacerbated by the tight time lines expected for completion, and throughput rates. The effects of this upon the kinds of projects, on student responses, on who is accepted or excluded, and on potential dishonesty are noted. Some of the contradictions that are becoming apparent in the system are also highlighted. Most glaring is the effect that supervisors feel that the more instrumentalist approaches are having on the development of researchers, their skills and on the quality and kind of knowledge that is being developed. This then is a serious contradiction of the very essence of the claims related to the neoliberal agenda which highlights an educated, especially a qualified citizenry as vital to innovation and national development. It raises doubt as to the particular kind of knowledge production and knowledge worker that is being developed and produced and therefore whether the innovation will be forthcoming. In some departments the close alignment between different aspects of academic

identity and the supervision process made the process less problematic, and in some instance allowed for outside influences for assistance. Others however were still faced with the challenge. The tension between autonomy and freedom versus compliance and consensus is important here.

Despite genuine concern for their students, it is clear that when the process becomes a cost for individuals in terms of their professional development, or when their personal values are challenged they limit or withdraw from particular activities. It is clear that when it challenges other interests especially research that individuals may choose to contain their exposure. This of course may be circumvented by emergent mechanisms in the form of new policy mandating supervision numbers but it raises the question of what this might do to the process. Challenges to autonomy and academic freedom may continue to fracture the academic environment.

The shift towards compliance, to standardisation and homogenisation through aspects such as the NQF, level descriptors and alignment, as well as through courses, notions of “best practice” along with others, is also resisted by most of the respondents. Given the highly varied nature of supervision in different higher education areas this seems like a counter-productive move. A shift towards an environment that encourages greater flexibility and variety, a policy environment in which policy is supportive and guiding rather than imposed, unbending and restrictive and the ability to encompass the variety that is supervision, recognising its multifaceted nature might be more generative in a range of different ways. Providing an environment which has a variety of supportive mechanisms that may be accessed by individuals, spaces in which discussions about practice happen as well as more formal courses and policy could increase engagement between novice and expert supervisors, as well as decrease the loneliness and isolation that can be associated with supervising. The use of the abilities and interests of all staff could be seen as an important way to increase capacity and maximise potential, and this would be enhanced by innovative staffing processes.

The power to approve postgraduate activities was once the primary domain of the university, who by virtue of the organisation and its domain, was entitled to offer postgraduate degrees. Secondarily, and arguably with perhaps greater power, disciplines within the academic community were the most obvious guardians of the process. Here the disciplines were closely involved in choice of supervisor, of topic and most certainly were the appointees of examiners under the watchful eye of their faculties and institutions. In particular the power of the examiners may be paramount in determining for both supervisor and student the success of the venture. These are the gatekeepers to entry into the discipline, into academia and for the granting of the qualification. Through the work

of higher degrees committees and board ratifications the processes were in place to monitor and oversee supervision. The supervisor as representative of the discipline, the purveyor of disciplinary knowledge was particularly powerful, however as portrayed through the narratives this power is being curtailed as they are able to make fewer choices, and this reflects also a loss of power for the discipline as they are no longer able to decide as freely who can supervise or the process to be followed.

In the new world of bureaucracies, of licentures, and of accreditations the power has shifted further to national levels where by dint of registration only certain institutions may be permitted to offer postgraduate degrees. Restrictions may be in place for certain types of higher education institutions. Issues related to the qualifications and abilities of staff to supervise are rapidly being mandated by outside bodies in an effort to regulate the sector and to control processes. In the same measure other bodies such as those funding research, industry bodies with particular interests in research may also wield some power in this respect through the requirements outlined in the ways in which grants will be approved and to whom. These are newly emergent structures that are impinging on the postgraduate sector. Such issues were to a large extent decided by disciplines themselves in liaison with their institutions but are now being mandated outside of academic communities. New requirements may have been introduced through such mechanisms as the quality bodies – put in place to regulate and accredit institutions. They decide now who may supervise, who may examine, new requirements in relation to the actual degree outcomes – in terms of product, and practice. Within the now almost universal capitalist system money is the driving force, and all must be implicated in the raising of such for their own activities. Education and the postgraduate sector are no exceptions. Thus those activities which ensure funding are the ones prioritised, and foregrounded by institutions. Therefore types of research, ways of conducting that research are privileged, as are types and areas of knowledge over others and this too is affecting supervision. Some have greater potential for accessing resources etc. than others. Certain projects, certain students, certain ways of studying are privileged through funding. Funding becomes not only an incentive but a reward system and as with all of these, people will work to manipulate these to their advantage – changing systems as they do so. In areas where funding is problematic, for either individuals or institutions, there may be ways in which they find to work with the system. This can be seen when students desperate for funding indicate they are full time to get the funding, but are in fact part-time working students.

Mechanisms of funding projects, and/or funding students may have a host of ramifications. It can impinge on curricula and on educational practice. It may challenge our knowledge of good practice.

For supervisors their individual power has been circumscribed through their ability to choose candidates in relation to their strengths, in terms of what projects they decide to engage with, in terms in some instance of how many students they will take, and what funding they are able to generate. They also have to balance this with increasing demands for publication and teaching as well as new research. They may also be circumscribed in terms of who and at what level they can supervise and examine. This fundamentally, at the individual level changes the relationships between supervisors and student, between supervisors and their institutions and affects what may be prioritised.

10.5 Concluding remarks

This study has explored the experiences of supervisors working in a single institution, but across a range of different disciplines. What this exploration of this under researched area allows is to provide a greater explanatory power for supervision. Their narratives outlining the way they took up the role, and then developed their different practices was illuminating, and reflected not only aspects of their disciplines or institution that influenced their practice, but also how their own evolving interests or concerns shaped what they focused their attention on, what they identified as enabling or constraining. It was clear that influences at different levels international, national, institutional and inter-individual as well as personal all affected what and how they operationalised this academic role. Exploring the interaction between structure, culture and agency allows for a more complete and multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon. The study was limited in that it explored the richness of the experiences of only eight individuals, and engagement with more individuals, and extension across more disciplines, different institutions and institutional types, as well as transnationally would enrich our understandings still further. Equally, taking this from only the supervisors, and omitting the student perspective limits the insights. Whilst studies often focus on one element of the process, previously the student experience, here and in a small emerging literature on supervisor experiences not all elements are explored equally. In particular there is less on the effects of the different influences on institutions themselves, and this could be a further area for research. An exploration of how the different elements interact and shape the process could also be highly informative and increase understanding.

Exploring the notion that supervisory practices are affected by the way supervisors exercise their agency within specific contexts required an examination of how individuals not only realize but also transform the role, in particular given the broader academic identity. Each respondent belonged to a

specific school, faculty and department, and as such were exposed to a variety of structures related to each, and interwoven with one another, as well as overlaid with the national and global. In each of these contexts different cultural milieus provide yet another set of resources and constraints. Individuals can draw on these, may be primary agents with few groupings to call upon, or they may have connections to both internal and external groupings in all these various areas giving them greater influence as social agents or even actors. They may draw a strong identity from such group membership. These different mechanisms may in some instances complement one another, whilst in others they may be in conflict or even contradictory. So in the supervisory space the tension between preparing students for industry, or for a qualification may sit uneasily with those committed to a more educational and developmental focus. Values such as these, personal projects and priorities, as well as whether individuals are traditional academics, disciplinary practitioners, or interested in academic teaching, or perhaps in institutional alignment and administration all had an effect on the how they embraced the supervisory role. Role as enacted is therefore an expression of who they are as an academic, their specific concerns, and their mode of reflection affects the way they respond, how and what they embrace and recognise as enablements or constraints.

Structure and culture was mediated by this agency, through individual personal powers and the identification of ultimate concerns. So whilst individuals may be positioned in the Higher Education in different ways by posts, by discourses, and by structures like departments or units they have a range of mechanisms which they are able to draw upon. Through these choices and decisions individuals are able to exert their agency. So whilst the role might be broadly similar, variance not only in the context, especially at disciplinary level through different research practices, but also in individual interests, and concerns, ensures role variance.

In conclusion the ability to support and enhance the effectiveness for postgraduate supervision for all those concerned lies in greater understanding of this complex suite of activities. Understanding these activities within the broader milieu of globalising and international higher education maybe important in order to prioritise aspects more effectively. for the requirements of society more widely.

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Appendix One:

Interview questionnaire:

Interview Question guide for Research into Supervisors experiences:

Could you please tell me about how you first began supervising, and how you have developed your supervisory practices over time.

Describe yourself as a supervisor. This can cover how you felt, challenges and issues but please include concrete examples from your own practice or experience.

Sub-questions:

When did you begin supervising and what were your experiences?

How have you developed your strategies for supervising?

Have these processes changed why, or have changes in the institution affected what you do?