

Exploring narratives of the motivation of School Governors

by

Rebecca Tee

Canterbury Christ Church University

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Frontispiece: Tee, R., (2013) *I am... Colourful*. Private Collage.

Fidelis In Parvo

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Exploring narratives of the motivation of School Governors

Abstract

Communities are increasingly atomised in post-modern times where individuation and anomie are increasing, and a deeper understanding is required of why individuals give their time to community involvement. The thesis explores an example of community engagement by investigating the motivation of school governors and how this role is part of lives and learning.

The historical context is outlined and the case is made for the beneficial and desirable effects of community involvement through reference to classical authors. By looking at current societal circumstances through contemporary authors as well as factors relating to feminism and by delving into individual responses to questions about why they volunteer, the research is necessarily interdisciplinary, and draws on different references to history, sociology, psychology and politics.

The research used a qualitative methodology and the significance of this form of enquiry is considered. During 2012 and 2013 auto/biographical qualitative interviews were conducted with four school governors. An additional longitudinal element was added as they were re-interviewed after one year. The resulting narratives were analysed for themes and issues and the author's own reflexive narrative is included as one of the four to locate herself in the work. Different ways of accessing auto/biographical information were explored and crystallisation of the results was employed.

The vital role of motivation is explored across the micro, meso and macro levels of engagement. The central argument is that a psychosocial interpretation is needed to start to understand what prompts individuals to put themselves forward for such a community role. Drawing on the work of Winnicott (1971), a unique combination of psychological factors relating to family background, upbringing and inherited values could be seen to be working agentically in conjunction with societal structures and mores to move an individual to this voluntary work. Reflecting Mills' (2000) treatise on the role of human agency in determining history, the different narratives showed the interface between these psychological and sociological elements and exhibited a clear need for recognition as outlined by Honneth (1995). The results show the necessity to

explore motivation with volunteers to encourage a successful involvement through identifying unique motivational factors and attending to those aspects which enhance self-esteem and self-respect. The conclusions indicate lessons for the recruitment and retention of school governors which are relatable to volunteering generally.

[376 words]

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

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a) Setting the scene

This thesis concerns the different life stories of school governors as examples of motivation to participate in community volunteering. School governors are the volunteers who oversee the running of schools in the UK. The research uses interviews as the method of inquiry and incorporates an interdisciplinary frame of reference to chronicle, analyse and theorise the personal and socio-cultural aspects of governorship. The biographies of individual governors are used together with the auto/biography of the author, also a school governor, and they are interrogated for emerging themes, issues and perspectives.

The work is an exploration of how participants define their own interaction with this one aspect of civic society. Many of society's organisations survive using a greater or lesser amount of voluntary labour, examples include local authorities, churches and many charities, and schools also have their proportion of voluntary help. School governorship represents a comparatively hidden area of volunteering. Despite this it is the biggest participation volunteer activity in the UK currently with around 350,000 school governors in post and a vacancy rate running nationally at 10% at any one time (James and Goodall, 2014). That means that it is a widespread activity, yet one where the details of who does this and their backgrounds and personal narratives have been under-studied. Little has been written on this topic and as such it clearly deserves fresh attention, not least to understand any implications for future recruitment and retention.

This research was carried out with a small number of governors to explore their motivation for becoming and remaining involved with the management of state schools on an unpaid basis. In-depth qualitative interviews were used to interrogate this one example of the volunteering landscape as part of the myriad of endeavours that exist. Issues around building community cohesion and solidarity were highlighted. The concept of community cohesion is a complex and contested one. In highlighting those aspects of social life where a certain homogeneity of ideas exists, it can mean a community that is harmonious and inclusive but could also indicate one which is docile, unquestioning and conformist. I am using it here in the sense of law-abiding, regulated and co-operative.

Civic society here is taken to mean those elements of group activity, structures and endeavour that help organise some aspect of social life. Marquand (2004) describes the public domain as an extra dimension of society,

It is a space, protected from the adjacent market and private domains, where strangers encounter each other as equal partners in the common life of the society – a space for forms of human flourishing which cannot be bought in the market-place or found in the tight-knit community of the clan or family or group of intimates (2004, p. 27).

As such Marquand was seeing the rights of a citizen having precedence over market power and family ties. He also saw a concomitant series of responsibilities to serve our communities. School governorship is a part of active participation in a democracy where an individual volunteers to help manage a local institution within a community. The role of being a school governor requires an interest in the institution, sufficient time to devote to the activity; some skills to contribute; a sense of enthusiasm for civic responsibility and a willingness to act transparently in all the dealings which relate to it. There are some similarities to the role of being a locally elected councillor of a local authority or member of a Parish council, although the remit of a councillor is more extensive, as decisions are made about a very broad range of aspects of local policy, services and amenities funded by the authority.

In the school setting any decision-making is only related to the specific institution itself. However, governing entails a legal and moral responsibility for all aspects of the school, including, most importantly, the use of public money on, and with a similar high importance, the education of the pupils. The role of governors in the UK and their relationship to local authorities has been complicated in recent years by legal changes to the organisation of schools begun in 2010 through the advent of the Academy system, where schools are funded directly by central government rather than that funding being channelled via the local authority as hitherto. The advent of Academies represented a political shift away from local democratic control by local authorities, being channelled instead direct to individual schools by central government. This change was driven by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government's desire to shrink the extent of local authority control. Democratically this had the effect of reducing local influence and control in local civic organisations whilst at the same time vesting increased control in the school.

Governors (or Academy trustees) were now the link to the funding stream rather than elected local politicians and the automatic connecting together of local institutions under the aegis of the local authority was usurped. This change was part of the revival of economic liberalism or neoliberalism. Heywood (2012) offers this summary of the times,

Neoliberalism was counter revolutionary: its aim was to halt, and if possible reverse, the trend towards 'big' government and state intervention that had characterized much of the twentieth century. Neoliberalism had its greatest initial impact in the two states in which free-market economic principles had been most firmly established in the nineteenth century, the UK and the USA. However, in the case of both 'Thatcherism' in the UK and 'Reaganism' in the USA, neoliberalism formed part of a larger, new right ideological project that sought to fuse laissez-faire economics with an essentially conservative social philosophy (2012, p. 49).

At a time of instability and lack of growth, economists such as Friedman (1912 – 2006) in the USA, argued that markets, left to their own devices, would be self-regulating and immune to the inefficiencies of the 'dead hand' of an interventionist state. Supremacy was given to market mechanisms and central planning was dismantled and avoided on the basis of inefficiency. However, it can be seen that in the case of the Academies project, removing the layer of local authority planning and control shifted ownership to central government and this was hardly likely to be a more efficient arrangement once the quantity of schools becoming Academies grew too large to manage. The potential implications for democracy were that in simplifying and narrowing the oversight and funding of schools, local issues were more difficult to take into account and a smaller number of unelected people were responsible for decisions around spending and standards than previously. The system of local democracy through the funding stream via the local authority may not have been perfect but it was a visible and accountable method of running and maintaining valuable civic resources such as schools.

b) Problematic

In 2010 I started my PhD thesis aged 51. Somehow between completing my Master's degree in 1991, almost twenty years had elapsed before I got round to registering for my doctoral studies. My Master's degree was in the subject of Management and my first thoughts after its completion were to pursue this area of study further through research

and I had got so far as to put a first attempt at a proposal together. The arrival of two children put academic research on hold until an ex-tutor from that same Master's course got in touch ten years later asking: *Haven't you done your PhD yet?* (Private email conversation with Professor Colin Talbot, Chair of Government at The University of Manchester, 2010). At around the same time I attended an academic conference on a careers theme (2010) and realised that as my professional field was careers guidance, I should perhaps orient my research topic to a subject more closely allied to this, rather than management (2010, Canterbury Christ Church University).

As a volunteer school governor for many years, I was interested in how my experience related to that of others. How could relevant literature illuminate this relationship between individual and organisation and civic society as a whole? Overt discussions of motivating factors had not taken place at any time since I had become a school governor. Motivation was just assumed to be present in sufficient enough quantity and to be robust enough unless and until someone resigned or dropped out and in that sense motivation was taken for granted. I had often felt ambivalent about the role of being a school governor, I got into it by chance and was sometimes torn between the feeling of being useful and the awareness of doing a lot of unpaid and uncelebrated hard and time-consuming work. This mixture of being willing to participate at the same time as begrudging my time and efforts meant that my motivation was not a stable or steady quantity, it was a fluid essence that waxed and waned at different times. Nonetheless at the time of my research I had maintained my commitment to the role for nearly ten years. I wondered if these emotions of ambivalence were typical of governors and was interested to see how my participants articulated their own motivation or lack of it.

Exploring the possibilities, I found there had been new developments in the academic world, a loosening up of disciplinary boundaries which harked back to my first degree where I studied Development Studies across all the social sciences. I also encountered a permissive atmosphere for a more creative approach where it would be possible to incorporate elements of literature, drama, poetry and photography to represent all my interests and to illuminate and elucidate my ideas. I had been inspired by the work of Hoult (2012) using film and literature as ways to increase understanding about the resilient learner.

Reading others' recent doctoral theses showed students turning their research into fictional accounts to highlight key themes (Edgington, 2013). One student used unconnected but meaningful personal artwork to inform and subdivide a thesis, viewing through different lenses to illustrate his arguments (Barnes, 2014).

Democratic participation is declining in the UK (Biesta, 2011, p. 5). Institutions which bring people together in mutual effort and joint endeavour are diminishing. Family structures are more fragile and dispersed. The neo-liberal flavour of modern times has inculcated a more 'liquid' and isolated normal state which makes flux the norm and stability uncommon (Bauman, 2007). Such circumstance in a multi-cultural society can mean any divisions are more significant, divides are deeper and mutual understanding is difficult to negotiate due to the lack of a public space for debate and conflict negotiation (Marquand, 2004). Peril and insecurity can follow as national divisions and global terrorism can flourish and separation between lifestyles supplants community cohesion. Understanding people of different cultural backgrounds, tolerance of different or opposing religious views, agreement and negotiation out of conflict, need to be worked at and inculcated in the world in order to promote security, harmony and opportunities for mutual benefit. In courageous and ground-breaking research, West clearly outlines the threats and issues that can be present if different religious and class groups remain uncommunicative. Polarisation of views soon results and illuminating debate either ceases or is unable to start (West, 2016).

Voluntary involvement in communities is one way of ensuring local people have a stake in the way that institutions which affect them directly are managed and this gives both the institution, the stakeholders and the volunteers a sense of accountability and social solidarity. Issues that cause conflict have to be debated to be resolved or to find a compromise and that is the only way to increase understanding of others' points of view to lead to a peaceful settlement, even if agreement cannot always be reached.

This research intended to explore and better understand the impulse of the research participants to engage in this forum and their continuance with it and it began in order to find out the answer to the question: do other school governors share my motivation for this role? This involved interrogating between three distinct levels, firstly about the personal question of identity, secondly with reference to the relationship with the school itself and thirdly the wider role of any societal meanings. I was interested to interrogate how people first came to become school governors and what prompted that

development. I also wanted to explore what was the significance of this civic role if any, for the participants in this research and whether civic involvement appeared as one of their motivating interests. To what extent did it appear that a wider societal motivation existed rather than just individual choices in relation to school governance?

In an era of diminishing political engagement, if the relevance of such activity could be identified and the experiences clearly described, it could provide pointers for others' involvement on a wider scale as Putnam (2000) highlighted in his major work *Bowling Alone*. The participants' observations could also point to the areas of difficulty and distraction that inhibit others from joining in or that make them drop out of the activity at an early stage.

School governorship was the specific case to be researched as an example of the wide range of community activity that comprises civic engagement. Part of the literature review examines writers who are concerned with wider engagement including studies of other countries. Informally surveying academic colleagues from different countries in Europe through the ESREA (European Society of Research on the Education of Adults) network I discovered that many European countries have a similar form of volunteer participation in the overview of educational establishments to the UK's school governors, although governing bodies are often called school boards in other countries.

From the stories of individuals, the work progresses to conclusions about the place of civic engagement in the meso and macro picture of society, taking a more sociological turn. In terms of my own motivation, this was bound up with notions of duty and service to be involved in some way with community development and I wanted to know what encouraged other governors to volunteer to sit in long, evening meetings on top of their day-job for a four-year term of office. Realising that others may have a quite different perspective on this role, I wanted to explore how being a school governor fitted in to their lives, or how they structured life around the activity, and to elicit their stories about it. It seemed important to hear from first-hand research what inspired someone to become and remain a school governor as a way of taking the questions further rather than use conjecture. Governing was an activity that I had pursued for over a decade and I knew that from a basis of this direct and personal experience, I would remain interested in the topic as a research field and it would sustain my longer-term involvement throughout and beyond the duration of my doctoral studies. I wanted to theorise this inquiry to learn wider and more enduring lessons.

My core contention, confirmed by the notable gap in any literature on the subject, was that individual motivation is not a subject which is often discussed between governors, even when they first join a governing body. Governing is an active and practical role and new recruits are normally too busy with day-to-day activities, such as attending meetings, for much personal debate or shared introspection. Hence this subject constitutes a fresh and important area for exploratory research. Of course, explicitly asking about individual motivation could be seen in opposition to the idea of voluntary work being due to unselfish altruistic behaviour. It might have proved to be a difficult question to answer when the prevailing discourse assumes, even dictates, that: ‘giving something back to society’ or ‘helping the community’ is surely the motivation at best, and at worst that the participants are doing it to further their own children’s interests within the school.

c) The wider context

In order to locate and situate the research interviews in the time and place in which they occurred it was important to contextualise the research (Riessman, 2008). A governing body is an example of a democratic structure. As that part of the school which oversees the work of the senior managers in terms of the business of running the school and the standards of education provided, it acts as a failsafe layer of accountability peopled by volunteers. Central government expenditure in the form of education budgets is raised in taxes and distributed to schools to spend on appropriate education for pupils. The governors are the ultimate body in the school accountable for that expenditure and the educational standards it purchases. In that sense governing as an activity is part of civic society and represents the combined working of individuals who wish to be involved together on a voluntary basis to help govern a local community institution. The governance of schools is a form of civic involvement, and as such is an example of a microcosm of civil society, being part of the decision-making process of, with and for, a community. Similar examples could be hospitals and charities.

Various democratic processes are at work here, from the election of parent governors from the whole parent body, to the scrutiny of public administration of education on the ground, to the reporting, debating and majority decision-making that takes place within meetings. Governors have to take responsibility for their actions and be accountable to the wider stakeholders such as parents and the local community for their decisions within the governing body itself. This can sometimes spill over into local communities as happened when certain schools were moving to become Academies over the last five

years. The resulting media attention, rowdy public meetings and articulate political opposition from local authorities and trade unions shone a light onto the otherwise latent operations of the governing body. Vulliamy writing in a national UK newspaper, *The Independent* (2016), wrote about protest marches by the major teaching unions of the day against the growth of the Academisation programme (Vulliamy, 2016).

Looking at the way that community engagement has changed and diminished and how voluntary roles are an example of civic involvement, the environment in the UK in which state schools are operating has changed rapidly over the last ten years. Since the start of the Academisation process in the 2000s, many schools are now run by private trusts and companies with the accompanying decline in the influence, oversight and aegis of the elected local authorities.

Early in 2014 the role of school governors in Birmingham in the English Midlands, was called into question. Accusations were made that some individuals were working to introduce an Islamist agenda into several schools. Their project was named 'Project Trojan Horse' after an incriminating letter was intercepted allegedly written by locally resident Islamists who were plotting to take control of a number of local schools. After an inquiry by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), the government-funded schools inspectorate, five Birmingham schools, all run by the same Educational Trust, were placed in special measures. One of Ofsted's claims was that these schools were failing to take adequate steps to safeguard their pupils against extremist views. Similar complaints emerged in other parts of the country. Ofsted accordingly expanded its investigation, looking at a range of other schools in London, Bradford, and Luton. In particular, Ofsted had found that, in some cases, teachers were attempting to introduce Sharia Law, or Islamist law overseen by religious leaders not national legal processes, and that pro-Islamic views, combined with hostile attitudes to other religions, were being regularly promulgated (Wintour, 2014).

Thus the role of the governing body is an important one. Although not directly responsible for the running of the school, it is the only body with the ability to question and be aware of any issues that could be detrimental to the development of the pupils or wider society. Scrutiny of the work of the school including values and political indoctrination is part of the role of the governing body and/or Academy trust, and balance and an informed understanding of the issues pertaining to a multi-cultural society are foregrounded in this responsibility.

In the light of the Academisation process, and the swing from accountability to autonomy, it can be seen that some of the implications of the removal of the local authority's oversight can have far-reaching consequences for the education of young people. Questions of who these governors are and how they select themselves for this activity arise. What mix of circumstance, personality and local opportunities brought about their involvement in school governing bodies and their inhabiting of this role on behalf of the community?

Headlines such as those mentioned above rightly provoked concerns and debate about the significance not only of schooling but also of the mechanisms of school governance in an era when old controls and scrutiny have been eroded, substantially altered or completely removed. Whilst attention is often paid to the quality and practices of the teaching workforce and particularly to the Head Teacher, there is also the relatively hidden but also instrumental vital influence of school governors. These two adjectives of 'hidden' and 'vital' can be seen as opposites. It is true that in a Junior School (7 – 11) with 340 pupils, the role of the governing body can seem to be fairly peripheral in the outstanding status enjoyed by the school. The school operates on a day-to-day basis without any necessary input from any of the governing body. Governors' meetings are generally held in the evenings when the school is finished for the day meaning that governors and staff rarely interact. The Head Teacher and Chair of governors will have a regular and informed exchange of views in person and by email and 'phone, but the school is run by its professional and paid team of staff, not by the volunteer governors, however well-meaning and skilled, or otherwise, they may be.

Yet the attitude that the governors are unimportant is mistaken. What they do have is influence both to promulgate policy and to scrutinise and amend practice. One of the defences against poor performance and/or indoctrination of pupils lies with those with the legal responsibility for the wellbeing of the school: the governors, who have the closest relationship with the local scene as parents and local community members, well ahead of, and at a more intimate level, than all other regulatory institutions such as the local education authority, Ofsted and national government.

In the UK governors are volunteers, they are not paid and the role is normally taken on for a period of four years. Their term of service can be extended for an additional term of four years subsequently. Each governing body contains in total around 14 to 20 members. However, Department of Education guidance in 2015 recommended that

governing bodies number no more than 12 people, a reduction from the 17 previous average (Government Statutory Guidance, September 2016). School governors do not run schools, instead they act in a similar way to a company board in a business setting. Their duties include overseeing the strategic direction of the institution, agreeing policies and objectives, approving the budget, reviewing financial progress and monitoring premises issues such as maintenance of, and repairs to, buildings. A key responsibility is to support, and where necessary, challenge the Head Teacher and senior staff. They also recruit the Head and play a part in the recruitment of teaching staff, checking on levels of pupil attainment and monitoring the wider contribution and relationship of the institution to the community in which it is located. Ultimately the governors are responsible for the welfare of the school and they also set the pay of the Head Teacher each year (summarised from Education Acts 1944, 1980, 1986, 1980).

The list of tasks for which school governors are accountable is daunting and they undertake very great nominal legal and moral responsibilities. Yet theirs is an odd accountability, as it is in reality very limited, which is perhaps reflected in the fact that this is a role carried out by volunteers. What is the worst that can happen to governors if the school collapses or fails to deliver? Financial liability is restricted to a nominal £10 per governor which is tiny in relation to institutional budgets running into millions of pounds. In addition, an individual can lose the right to undertake such a voluntary post for the future, but that is all. There is no criminal charge unless a law has been broken, no punitive response or even much personal ignominy, since public awareness of individual governors' behaviour is very restricted. Hence the responsibility is weighty in principle, yet oddly limited, even paltry, in personal terms.

Each individual governor is a member of a governing board which is established in law as a corporate body. In practice the gubernatorial duties are conducted either via meetings of the whole governing body or via smaller sub-committees. The gender balance lies in favour of women who constitute approximately 60% of the total. A survey by the National Governors' Association (NGA) in 2016 received 5,000 responses; 40% of all respondents were male and 59% female. Breaking this down by role, 47% of Chairs were male compared with 52% who were female (NGA, 2016). One third of governing bodies is reserved for appointed but not elected representatives of the local community, a third is comprised of elected parents/carers of pupils at the school and up to one third can be staff members. Head Teachers are ex-officio members of

their governing bodies to which they also report. Governors can be co-opted on to the governing body on account of particular experience or expertise (Education Act 2015).

Over recent years the political landscape for state schools has been rapidly and radically altered. In 2000, under the Labour government of 1997 to 2007, due to issues of educational performance being worryingly under the national average which caused pupil applications to shrink, threatening their viability, certain schools were granted new Academy status which effectively removed them from the auspices of the local education authority. These schools were run by a trust, received their funding direct from central government instead of it being routed through a local education authority as previously, and were able to form partnerships with local employers to inject cash and management skills. The expressed aim was that by changing the organisational arrangements and allowing for external influence, the eventual target of increasing the attainment level of the pupils would be more likely. Often in deprived areas where teacher recruitment was more difficult and the pupils exhibited deep-seated behavioural problems and familial disadvantage, the guiding idea was that freeing schools to be run under a different model, could attract extra resources from business sponsorship relevant to their needs and the organisational and managerial skills to organise a successful institution.

The Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government of 2010 to 2015 allowed any schools which had been labelled 'outstanding' by Ofsted to become an Academy and several, particularly those who were keen to operate outside of the sphere of the local authority, followed suit. The Academies Act of 2010 encouraged the number of Academies and free schools which were not in the control of local education authorities to proliferate (UK Government, 2010). The resulting increase of Academies from just 203 in 2010 to 4,515 in 2016 represented new schools and existing schools converting from local authority run to Academy status. This meant that the picture of local provision and accountability shifted control away from elected local authority councillors to appointed governors and unelected Academy trust members (BBC, 2016). This change was a clear ideological shift from local authority control of schools to a more limited, largely self-appointed group of governors.

These new Academies were not the previously failing schools, but the best of the bunch. They were confident and thriving institutions which in some cases sought to escape from the control of the local authority. In a few examples, this was due to bad

relationships with the authority and in others, such as with the schools in my local area, was due to the wish to benefit from taking responsibility for their own financial control, spending decisions and future direction. The new arrangements meant that the role of governing bodies was different and schools were no longer tethered to the old democratic structures.

This gave freedom and offered schools the choice of which services they bought in, but also offered the prospect of a couple of significant disadvantages: uniformity of standards and treatment were no longer guaranteed for pupils or staff, nor was the safety net of administrative and corporate responsibility provided by a multi-million pound local authority. Most importantly the governors, although including representatives of parents and staff, no longer had to have representatives put forward by the local authority. Community or co-opted governors could still be sought and appointed from the local area as before. During the previous ten years, the local financial arrangements for schools had been evolving and by 2015 very few local authority services were not charged for at commercial rates and a not inconsiderable 'top-slice' of the money paid for each pupil by central government on the school roll was kept from each school by the authority for administrative and educational purposes. To assist with the granting of Academy status the Government also provided funds for such schools for the transfer away from the local authority in terms of money for legal fees and the necessary HR transition.

Several new Academy chains grew, with several schools under one management and leadership. The Conservative government of 2015 made it clear that smaller governing bodies were preferable and that local authority and parent/carer representatives were no longer necessarily required (DoE, 2016). Indeed the tie to the locality is even being severed as business skills are listed as most desirable and a central bank of interested employees of big companies has been compiled from which possible governors may be drawn. This brief summary of recent history shows that schools in general and Academies in particular have been through a period of rapid political change and flux.

Prior to these changed from the 1960s to the 1980s, the political influence on and link to governing bodies was overtly acknowledged as schools were a key community resource and local hub. The list of governing body vacancies was circulated by the local authority to the main local political parties to request volunteers and each of the parties would nominate people to sit on governing bodies. My mother was a school governor at

two schools in the 1960s, nominated by the local Labour Party to ensure political balance amongst governors. It was always difficult to find enough volunteers to be put forward from the Labour Party when most of their members worked. The Conservative Party seemed to have more success in finding governors as there were many women who did not work in their membership and they had plenty of retired members. The first school governing body that I joined was in the mid-1980s and I volunteered to be a school governor at that time after hearing about the long list of unfilled governor vacancies through a Labour Party meeting. I had just moved to the inner city area and was keen that Labour should be properly represented in local organisations.

The old motivating factors of local political representation, public service and the contribution possible by individuals in these processes was changing and being supplanted by bigger and more hard-faced financial concerns as schools became more autonomous educational businesses. There was a wider sociological perspective to be interrogated which was illustrated by the Coalition government's Big Society initiative of 2011. This urged an increase in the take up of voluntary roles to expand the involvement, and therefore the stake, of individuals in society (UK Government, 2010). The vision behind the initiative was to devolve more responsibility to local communities away from central state control.

Individuals need to co-operate freely with others to build community enterprises which benefit both individuals and groups in society. As part of the ideological project of marketisation under Prime Minister Thatcher, there was a toughened central stance in relation to reduced welfare payments since the 2000s. The loosening of extended family networks since the 1960s was echoed in the pushing back of previously more inclusive community involvement in local publicly funded organisations. Without this co-operation, citizens were liable to become atomised and isolated and less able to exercise democratic political governance of society. In Durkheim's term, they can suffer from "anomie" or social isolation (Burkitt, 2008, p. 19). The work of school governors may have benefits which exist on three levels, on the micro level of the individual working in concert with others for joint aims and outcomes, at the meso level for the improvement and continuance of the local organisation and on the macro level of the safeguarding of public funds and standards for all our children and young people.

d) Theoretical underpinning

A large body of literature deals with many of the themes that are relevant to this study covering several different domains of knowledge. Immediate inspirations when the approach to the research was being established came from several different fields. Feminist works by authors such as Steedman (1986) and Oakley (2005) on the importance of the subjective and personal, and literature around narrative research and the subtleties and contradictions of testimony and the patterns and immersion needed for ethnography, were significant to the decisions about the methodology where an auto/biographical approach was selected. Several innovative feminist authors were particularly helpful, Ellis' (2003) fictionalisation of her research, Stanley (1992) and the American academic Richardson (1997) all stimulated thoughts about collecting significant meaning and about the co-construction of research material.

Methodologically these three authors advanced the field of auto/biographical writing, both significantly and permissively. As feminists, they promoted the use of the personal, the creative and the subjective in biographical writing and they stressed the necessity for the development of such writing to provide both the context of the relationship and the approach. There can be seen to be a risk of research becoming too subjective and individualised but, by the comparison and contrast of one witness testimony with others, common themes and individual exceptions are clarified. The stress on the necessity of the thoughtful, the reflective and the immersion both by the participant and the researcher encouraged me to focus on in-depth interviews as my research tool in what was to be essentially an exploration of personal stories in a search for meaning. It was also clear that my own biography would need to be explored as part of the research, hence the auto/biographical labelling. Here I am consciously using the term auto/biography rather than autobiography to underline that the 'I' and the 'other' are intertwined; that we use others to make sense of our own life and the latter to make sense of others'.

Motivation is a simple word representing a complex process. It indicates those wants or desires that lead to decisions around actions or behaviour. Those decisions can exert a positive and/or a negative pull and can be conscious and/or unconscious in origin. Relationships, experience, understanding and communication all play their part in how motivated a person feels about a particular subject or activity and motivation can ebb and flow and be mixed and confused. Motivation can exist to please or respond to others' extrinsic wishes or it can be described as more of an intrinsic urge.

Talbot (2005) describes the Hawthorne experiment where workers in the 1920s and 30s in the USA improved their productivity when being observed, paid attention and had their conditions of work, such as lighting arrangements, varied. These elements were introduced to the workers as attempts to treat them better, to which they responded and they reacted to the perception that they were being valued,

...this approach has concentrated on multi-faceted human motivation – that people do not just work for money (rational goal) and that they value some ‘self-actualisation’ and ‘autonomy’ as against rigid rules (internal process/bureaucracy) (Talbot, 2005, p. 20).

Motivation to adopt a role such as that of a school governor is difficult to identify, for oneself, let alone communicating this to others.

It is worth noting that all such personal narratives about civic experiences can also be interpreted in more sociological terms. Such approaches offer a more impersonal and wider account and are undoubtedly helpful in framing the context. Hence there is no need to regard auto/biographical and sociological approaches as incompatible. Over sixty years ago in his classic work *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills exhorted researchers continually to,

... work out and revise your views of the problems of history, the problems of biography, and the problems of social structure in which biography and history intersect (Mills, 2000, p. 225).

Mills saw the enquiry into personal biography as essential for effective sociological analysis. Sociological forms may be observable to some extent, such as friendship groups in a playground, but the explanation of why those different groups exist and any analysis of why they change, will follow on from individual reasons, causes and conclusions. The needs of the individual underpin and create the interactions between people who form groups in society. Society and its workings may be visible but it is comprised of individuals’ movements, thoughts, feelings and decisions.

This supports my approach to this thesis where narrative leads to an understanding of group activity and sociological agency. The different body of knowledge which underpins the topic included dramaturgical literature such as Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). One of the first to use a theatrical analogy, he described the human as an actor moving through different roles according to the

situation and circumstance. Goffman was insightful in drawing attention to the experience of the individual being involved in role-playing to adjust and thrive, through a variety of everyday activities both public and personal.

In analysing the motivation of school governors, use is made of three different levels of scrutiny. The micro level of the individual was considered through the work of Winnicott (1971) and West (2016), the former deciphering the early influences which as children signpost to us the behaviours of adults and the latter observing the different relationships between an individual and his or her community. The discourses operating at the meso level of the school as an institution were analysed with reference to Goffman (1959) and his work on human interaction and dramatic roles played. Marquand's (2004) work on the decline of public spaces for co-existence and life-sharing describes the changes that have taken place over the last century specifically.

At the macro level of societal expectations and associations a major contribution has been made by Putnam (2000) in the United States of America, Sennett (2013) in the UK and their debt to a previous generation of theorists such as Durkheim is acknowledged. Putnam's *Bowling Alone* is an impressive research work into the decline across the whole range of community and shared activities in the USA over the last fifty years, which has many parallels with the situation in the UK. He identifies the major reasons for the decline which are not necessarily the most obvious causes. On the strength of the research he draws conclusions about how to combat these changes and his later work explores examples of this. His data and arguments have generated lively debate as to whether he has exaggerated the process of decline (Boggs, 2001; Durlauf, 2002). Nonetheless Putnam's overall case has much to offer when considering how to increase motivation among the general public, especially at a time when there are shortages of volunteers in our own communities.

Overarching all of these writers is the manifold work of Honneth (1995) whose philosophical work on recognition, respect and self-esteem provides an illuminating framework for understanding the whole of the factors that are significant to voluntary connections. He elucidates the deep need for recognition in a familial sense and in terms of involvement with peers and achievements in the community. These insights proved very helpful in identifying motivational factors for the kind of civic activity entailed by being a school governor and for opening a discussion of motivation at the differing levels of the micro, meso and macro. Honneth also wrote about the opposite of

recognition - disrespect - and the significance and implications of such relationships can be observed in the case narratives which follow.

Sociologists across the last two centuries from de Toqueville (1835) through Durkheim (1893) to Putnam (2000) have debated the necessity for the building of alliances with others in order to form a civil society through cohesive social bonds. Society is an associative collaboration for pleasure, economic survival and well-being as can be evidenced when humans co-operate in a social and mutually supportive environment such as provided by tribal associations, e.g. extended families and kinship groups.

Holding the office of a school governor in a voluntary capacity forms a distinctive element of an individual's career, in the broadest sense of his/her journey through life. Career development literature and studies relating to voluntary activity generally such as Krumboltz (2010) and Elsdon (1995) constitute some of the contextual source materials for this research. Resilience is a concept which can be applied to the governing experience. Hoult's (2012) work debates this concept and is used to illuminate the ability and necessity to persist in times of difficulty.

e) Methodology employed

Epistemology is the 'theory of knowledge', how I know what I think I know. The inheritance of positivism in the social sciences is that of approaching the studying of society in a scientific way – analysing 'social facts'. Sociologists provide scientific explanations for social events and identify solutions for social problems and develop theories about society. Interpretivism in contrast emphasises understanding the accounts and meaning-making and social significance people have in relation to their social worlds. This highlights 'multiple realities'. An interpretive approach aims to bring out the meaning of people's actions, thoughts and leanings. Our physical being as a collection of cells provokes questions about the significance of relationships. What meaning can be ascribed to our social behaviour if humans in essence are an amalgam of experience, memory and values? Damasio argues for an inclusion of bodily experience and emotions in the list of significant factors determining the self (Damasio, 2000).

My epistemological framework is that we gain understanding through dialogue and communication, I place the human thoughts coming to the surface through voice as the primary source of information and the interview as the best way to elicit direct viewpoints. Of course interviews have their limitations in terms of the ethical issues that

may arise, the power relations that can distort and mislead and the structural difficulties of getting at any 'truth'. But this is a method of communication that allows people to reflect in action (Schön, 1983) to give an immediate and personal response knowing that they are listened to and respected for their views. I have been trained in interviewing techniques and have used this method to operate in my professional life over the last thirty years. I have also taught these skills to others. I regularly act as a mentor and coach, so am comfortable at getting people to talk and open up, and am experienced at probing for deeper meaning to facilitate understanding and change.

My ontological view that informs my approach includes a humanistic understanding of life which underlines the significance of human interaction and the priority given to human voice. As a humanist I have a profound sense of our responsibility to each other. I believe in the desirability of peace and cooperation and that there is more in life that genuinely connects and unites peoples, than divides them. The question of axiology, or my values, needed to be covered. I examined my own motivation to be involved in school governance in the auto/biographical chapter which follows but an early mention must be made to explain that one of my values is the need and responsibility I see for members of a community to contribute to that community as well as benefit from it. Community is an important aspect of life in my world. Humans as social animals stand or fall through fellowship with others, in good times benefitting through company and shared endeavour and in hard times through protection, assistance and rescue. I believe a community to be enriched through association.

The research was carried out using a social constructivist stance whilst leaning towards and experimenting with an artistic/interpretive paradigm, to give insights and refracted views and to encourage an open mind when conducting research and analysing material gathered. Etherington explains how research is often taken on as a result of a passion about the subject,

... in the field of counselling and psychotherapy many doctoral candidates choose to focus on a topic that has some personal meaning for them, knowing that this connection will develop and grow over time and keep them engaged in what can sometimes be a difficult and lonely process (Etherington 2004, p. 179).

In this way the idea of what to research came ahead of the decision on methodology.

My approach used auto/biographical narrative interviews. Getting my participants to tell their own stories about their involvement with governing and what that experience was like for them, allowed for more of a stream of consciousness to flow, key factors, issues or events are theirs and any early analysis is produced as part of their story. Individual narratives, when allowed to be unbroken and loosely prompted, inspired a wealth of information from my participants, encouraged their in-depth reflection and elicited their conclusions and summaries. In this way, a true mutual collaboration occurred as part of these interviews. Each was different, reflecting the divergent previous relationship with the person concerned if there was one, their personalities and their relationship in the actual interviews with me. They were personal testimonies in an interpersonal space (Andrews, 2007).

The auto/biographical aspect of the research is an additional respectfulness to my participants. I am from the same voluntary background being a school governor, so it made sense to interrogate my own motivation. It also got me to experience the same enquiry that I made of my participants. It unearthed and specified the author's viewpoint and background which in turn helped to situate and contextualise my analysis and concluding comments.

Ethical considerations are significant in any social research particularly that with personal testimonies (Holliday, 2007). As well as changing all the names of the research participants, those of any other people mentioned, the schools concerned and any places specified, I strived for anonymity throughout the thesis. I have altered wording only to protect the participants who were consistently open and confiding in their interviews, as I wanted to retain the original words used as much as possible and retain the essentials of the story. The more I worked on their interviews the more conscious I became of this element of the research. I aimed at achieving a balance of authenticity against anonymity.

I approached the analysis as a task requiring immersion in the material and through transcribing the interviews myself and then listening again to the recording and reflecting, I re-lived the interview experience many times over. The second interview with each participant after a gap of a year provided a different kind of revisiting where both the participant and I could reflect together on the topics previously covered, giving a longitudinal element to show changes or development over time. Appendices III, IV and VI offer examples of the different stages of the analysis.

This was in-depth qualitative interviewing using the ‘rich’ data of self-told stories to illuminate and explain individual perceptions about motivation. Only a small number of participants were sought in order for the research to be physically practicable to execute and interpret in the timescale. One of the participants was known to me as a friend who opportunistically, once she heard about my research, offered to be a participant and another who volunteered was a governor colleague. I approached the local authority clerking service for recommendations and this provided two more possible participants who were each keen to participate, one saying, *This is great as it will give me a chance to think about why I do this work*. The participants were aware of the subject of the research generally as being about their motivation to become and remain as governors. Interviews took approximately an hour and a half each and each one was repeated after around a year, for a picture over time to emerge. This gave the participants time to reflect on the process and to report back on the subsequent year’s experience. Three hours in total of narrative from each participant meant a large amount of accounts, stories and reflections arose from each person and more interviews would have been unwieldy. There is a debate about how many participants are ‘enough’ for such research with some arguing that, depending on the context, just one person could be plenty (Baker and Edwards, 2014).

University consent forms were completed prior to the interviews. Interviews were conducted at my home, between 2011 and 2012 and then repeated a year later for longitudinal purposes. They were recorded on digital devices, faithfully transcribed verbatim and then shared with the participants. Deep perusal and interrogation of the resulting material took place using Merrill and West’s auto/biographical analysis proforma which is a helpful prompt sheet and outline of key areas to note and delve into (Merrill and West, 2009). (Appendix V shows this proforma.) Interviews took the form of unstructured interactions. Beyond introducing the topic and inviting a response, the format of each interview was not pre-planned and only followed the narrative that emerged. Questions were prompted for more information, for more depth or for stimulating a new area of thought. The narratives flowed in all the interviews although some more naturally reticent interviewees required more prompting whereas some were verbalising almost non-stop.

This research was initially undertaken with a group of four school governors and myself to explore their motivation to do this voluntary activity, although at the writing stage, I decided to limit the number of participants to three and myself. These individuals were

interviewed and I was included as an example, making this an auto/biographical study locating the author firmly in the middle of the research process. Accessing autobiographic writing, to see oneself reflexively, to be able to perceive and describe one's own motivation is undoubtedly a challenge. Discovering creative methods for stimulating self-analysis and discovery were helpful and led me to use personal family artefacts to help with this endeavour. My introduction to collage and other artistic stimuli came too late to use with my participants but I include my own collage, representing myself in abstract form, in the frontispiece of this thesis to acknowledge its contribution to my personal autobiographic enquiry. Other creative methods employed were through experimenting with ways of writing. There are always choices to be made about how to represent the interview and its contextual background. Different literary devices were used to create a screenplay of one interview encounter and also to create a prologue to introduce the complex back story to another interview. I also used a reflective first person introduction in the auto/biographical chapter. The aim was to build on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical ideas about human interactions and use these creative writing methods to present information with a different slant or viewpoint to better illustrate the manifold ways of considering any given relationship.

Overall my approach may be defined as crossing the boundaries between psychological causes and social explanations of behaviour in that it investigates the individual's story within its wider social structure and context, in order to illuminate motivation to join and stay as a governor. Hence whilst my research cannot undertake a full sociological profiling of all Britain's school governors (partly because no systematic data are available) I am aware that individual and personal experiences are framed within wider contexts – which are highlighted in the analysis which follows.

My participants provided their own narratives and drew their own conclusions as central to the process. They pinpointed the influences that brought them to governorship, discussed their motivation to join the governing body of a school and analysed their reasons for staying on. The focus of this thesis is what prompted the involvement of these individuals in this particular voluntary activity and what sustained their long-term commitment to staying the course. Such research provides bedrock information, not currently available elsewhere, thus promoting a deeper understanding of the role of school governors, and an analysis that may assist with how to attract others to this role and keep their involvement.

Reviewing these research methods, my supervisor asked about my participants: *How will you enable them to be seen?* After thorough immersion in the text, the generation of themes and thinking about process and ethnographic aspects, I constructed what West calls ‘pen portraits’ for each participant who appears in their own narrative chapter in this thesis (Merrill and West, 2009). These pen portraits, or summaries of those aspects which seem significant, are part of the analysis and come at the end of the interpretive process, and can help to discover what the overall story or the gestalt might be.

Alison was a governor with long service who had been awarded an OBE for her work on governing bodies. Married with a grown-up family, many years of experience at inner city primary schools had given this poised, capable and warm woman a confidence in her dealings with Head Teachers and authorities. Leadership of voluntary bodies came easily to her and she participated widely in the community. In her 60s at the time of this research, she had devoted a large amount of time and energy to being a school governor over a twenty year period. From the first interview to the second, Alison’s experience varied to a large extent due to some dramatic and stressful events in the duration.

Thomas was a single man in his fifties, from an ethnic minority background. An IT manager before he took early retirement, a single parent with a teenage son, he was quietly spoken with a ready smile. On the surface not a pushy person, he earned an award from the local authority for his chairing of school governing bodies in schools that had had some problems. He was steady and dependable and quite reticent about his own skills and abilities although not averse to plotting manoeuvres to reach his desired outcome.

Kay was in her fifties, married with one son, John. Lively and well-mannered, she was previously an actor and since the demise of that career, had made her living cooking for private dinner parties. She had recently taken a governorship in the local special school attended by John, who was on the autistic spectrum. New to the role, she found it a difficult experience in terms of finding her place and by the end of the research, she had stepped down after a single, unsatisfactory term of office.

I am included as a research participant. A female, single parent in my fifties I had been a school governor several times. A habitual volunteer in my spare time, I was self-employed as a careers specialist and author. At the start of the research I was helping oversee the transition of an outstanding Junior School from local authority control to a

Multi Academy Trust. I was a governor with senior responsibilities and a sometimes ambivalent attitude to the role.

I also interviewed Stephen, although later decided not to use material from his interviews as he shared many aspects of his experience with Alison and I felt there was a danger of duplicating the analysis. He very much enjoyed his interviews and felt it had given him a useful space for considering and reflecting on his journey as a governor, especially helpful for him as he had just taken over chairing a governing body and was keen to think through this new role.

f) Research questions

My research questions were:

1. What is the experience of a small sample of governors (including myself) with regard to governorship?
2. Which factors emerge as important in their motivation to become and remain governors?
3. How can these experiences be theorised drawing on literature from psychology, sociology and community engagement literature?

After the research had been conducted and stimulated by further reflection and reading, I added a fourth question:

4. What does the research into school governance reveal about social solidarity through community interaction?

Phillips and Pugh describe the features of exploratory research thus,

This is the type of research that is involved in tackling a new problem, issue, topic about which little is known, so the research idea cannot at the beginning be formulated very well. ... It obviously involves pushing out the frontiers of knowledge in the hope that something useful will be discovered (1987, p. 45).

These questions indeed developed over the course of the research, from the start to the finish, retaining the same issues to be analysed but with greater understanding of the complexities involved. The act of becoming a governor, learning how to be a governor, acting in the role of being a governor, taking on the status of being a governor, inhabiting that status, all involved different feelings and experiences that were complex

to delineate and describe. Merrill and West (2009) refer to the potential confusion when research questions change. New and more profound factors emerge only as the understanding of the field of enquiry deepens. On the other hand, the hope is that the incremental posing of more nuanced and probing questions produces more finessed and significant replies.

Some reasons are unique to the individual concerned and others will be more generic to all school governors. This diversity was the core focus for analysis: to theorise these reasons in terms of personal development, family history and psychological orientation, any or all of which may have affected the values and outlook held by the adult. Societal expectations play a part and civic involvement and participation in the democratic space of today's communities was also a relevant concept to interrogate.

What is the balance between the unique aspects of the individual concerned and the societal influences which motivate people to get involved in volunteering generally and governing specifically? It may have been that those who became governors saw the role just as a branch of volunteering or perhaps governing could be classified separately as having distinctive features that attract people to the role. During the research I explored the benefits that are perceived to make it a worthwhile repository for their participation and questioned whether the reality of their involvement provides these expected benefits. I explored what relevance history plays both in terms of individual inheritance and the development of the role itself. The sociological imagination called for by C. Wright Mills (2000) indicates the necessity of interpreting behaviour through a historical lens for a full understanding of the way social structures interlink with individual experience.

There may be a certain type of person who is drawn to this kind of civic role or some characteristic of the social realm around the local school that is attracting a particular wish-fulfilment in terms of those who volunteer in that life-world. The extent of the nature of the individual and the various social drivers were assessed for their relative significance to the elements promoting this involvement. Going beyond the motivation of the individual actors, this research using a qualitative approach, explores an aspect of applied civics. There was likely to be a range of different factors pertaining to motivation of governors so the different academic disciplines of psychology, sociology, history and philosophy were consulted in a pluralistic approach to analysis and illumination.

There are a number of important ethnographic works by experts who live with and experience life alongside their research participants. Their aim is to observe and chronicle people's experiences by participating themselves in the same processes as far as possible. That allows for first-hand testimony from the researcher along with that of the original participants. It is an approach that has generated considerable debate as to how authentic such copying can be in practice, especially when the researcher comes from a very different background from the research subjects under investigation. I decided to concentrate not so much upon the ethnographic approach as upon the auto/biographical. My aim was to look for differences and disparity between my own experience and that of others without assuming anyone would share my motivation or experiences as a school governor. Ethnographic studies such as Ellis' *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (2001) and Paul Atkinson's *Everyday Arias: An Operatic Ethnography* (2006) tend to leave readers to surmise themes and to draw conclusions for themselves. My own work as a researcher led me to interrogate the responses of my participants, to draw out relevant themes and threads, hence in that sense directing readers. In short, whilst not eschewing insights from ethnography, my approach is auto/biographical, similar to, but differing from, ethnographic immersion.

g) Theoretical positioning

My theoretical positioning encompasses that I am a social scientist (the subject of my first degree) and I have worked in the service sector as a careers counsellor for many years. I am humanistic in that I see the world as people-centred and a rationalist in that I make judgements based on empirical knowledge and my values. I am also a feminist, who is interested in critical realism, that is the reflexive study of the complex and mutable interrelationships between aspects of society that form the way we live and act.

I perceive society through a socially constructivist lens in that I see reality as an essentially dialectical process where the actions of individuals together and separately through their social relationships, work to create the understanding and complexity of group and societal behaviour. This means that there is an openness and a dynamism to the nature of society and the perception of societal norms.

Narrative studies is the field in which I am positioned. My social constructivist outlook means that the auto/biographical narrative interview where I and others tell our stories about our lives, our histories and our stories, provides the basis for my research.

Individuals in society together and separately create their lived experience as governors, both building on the reality that existed hitherto and forming the basis for future such experiences to be adapted and developed further in turn.

The research methodology used is auto/biographical narrative. It is essentially storytelling and as non-linear, messy and compromised as are all our stories. We all live in our own imagined worlds, with our own thoughts, emotions and actions which both create and react to what is around us. The narratives which result, strongly suggests a psychosocial motivation in all its complexity, for that form of community interaction that is governing.

Honneth provides a key theoretical base in his understanding of the dynamics of self/other recognition, to be considered as part of interrogating the contextual psychosocial constructivism in this auto/biographical narrative inquiry.

h) Careers guidance

A theme of careers work and the idea of career development runs through the thesis and my theoretical positioning relates to my own motivation as a governor and my study of others'. I work in the careers guidance profession as a careers counsellor and this motif is carried through the thesis as a duality, firstly through my research approach and with my own volunteering as a governor as an example of voluntary work within a career. My voluntary work is an important part of my own career and it prompted the choice of my research questions. I therefore have many work identities: careers counsellor, volunteer, governor and researcher.

I chose auto/biographical narrative interviews as my research methodological framework partly because of my professional background. As a careers counsellor my primary method of working is to collect and work with the biographical narratives of my clients to help them see, reflect on and understand their own experiences, according to their subjective perspective. This is based on a strong philosophy such as articulated by Egan (1980) that self-knowledge comes from an individual being able to reflect on their experiences in order to analyse their own behaviour and so develop. The terms of narrative and auto/biography have a history of being widely used in the family of literature around careers counselling and adult education fields by authors, examples are Reid (2015) and West (1996) respectively.

Winnicott (1971) provided the concept of the transitional spaces in which the developing child can feel secure and acknowledged. With the mother or parent providing security and the freedom to play and experiment, the growing infant can satisfactorily endeavour, make errors and have successes. The work of a careers counsellor provides such a confidential and protected space for her clients. My research work was an example of using a similarly unique place for my research participants where they could ruminate on their experience of governorship without much interruption, with a highly engaged audience and draw their own conclusions about their development through that journey.

Reflexivity is a key thread which runs through this thesis, that deep analysis of our own involvement in the events, relationships and emotions of a life. Reflexivity refers more broadly to a sensitivity to feelings and sensations, memory, imagination and the fantasy world, in the search for an identification of the complex interplay of the internal and external world through which we perceive and feel. In the careers counselling context, McCormack and Ryan (2011) refer to reflexivity as:

... the capacity to be aware of ourselves in the practice of listening to another person, the capacity to use what we are aware of in that listening in the service of the client while at the same time being critically aware of our own frames of reference and the extent to which they are interfering with or facilitating the work we are doing with a client (2011, p. 7).

As a careers counsellor I work on my reflexivity with regard to my relationship with my clients, and through my academic work foster my own reflexivity about the research process and also about myself as an auto/biographical subject in it. I achieved this through the analysis process of deep immersion in the stories of my participants, dwelling on issues and emotions through the keeping of research journals and by submitting my ideas to challenge and scrutiny by peers and supervisors in the academy.

i) Original contribution

Much of the existing literature focuses on the effects of a governing body on school performance rather than on any individual experience in the role. An example is the FASNA (Freedom and Autonomy for Schools - National Association) Report on *Effective Governance* (FASNA, 2012). Parallels with other voluntary activities such as political work or community involvement emerge which may be helpful in terms of encouraging people to participate more fully in their local communities.

The individual experience of a school governor can be aided by an understanding of the primacy of individual motivation to become and remain one. A useful development can be for a governing body to conduct a formal induction with new governors at time of joining the governing body. As part of this induction explicit questions should be posed to encourage the new recruits to think about and express their hopes, plans and feelings about this new role. This can then be revisited at yearly intervals as a method of keeping in touch with individual governors, overtly recognising that each person brings different ideas, preconceptions and baggage to the role, and with the aim of increasing satisfaction around the experience as a whole. This involves governors seeing their role as having more in common with a work role than that of a part-time interest.

At the methodological level, new parallels are made between auto/biographical work and historical sources which present a powerful addition to the rationale for narrative research. There may be a practical significance to be gained from studying governors' motivation at the three different levels of micro, meso, and macro analysis. New and potential governors could be encouraged to reflect on their own assumptions of what will be gained at these different levels.

j) Structure of thesis

Following on from this first introductory chapter, the second chapter of this thesis is the Literature Review which examines key authors and works which illuminated my enquiry. It was inevitably a wide-ranging exploration of underpinning ideas across methodological areas as well as those of individual behaviour, community, social solidarity and politics. The literature review therefore has an interdisciplinary nature as it provides the link to authors with a contribution across these topics and it reflects the breadth of study undertaken.

Chapter 3 is the Methodology chapter containing the methodological information and overview for the thesis. It starts with a full explanation of the underpinning philosophy for the research including using auto/biographical methods and the choice of research questions. This is followed by a description of the research design and ethical considerations relating to the work. The essential element of researcher reflexivity is covered including explaining the creative elements contributing to it. Choice, number and involvement of the participants follows including using friends as participants. The whole process followed for the collection of material through interviews and other methods is then detailed. The way that the material is treated as a transcript including a

crystallisation process with peers is covered and links with careers guidance are made. The benefits of the longitudinal element of the research are presented and then the analysis is explained and justified including the use of a proforma to facilitate this.

The story of each participant's story and analysis is awarded a separate chapter and the results are displayed as individual narrative chapters. Kay, Alison, Thomas and Rebecca all tell their story in their own words and provide their own conclusions, tracking back to their motivation at the start and then during their period of governorship. My analysis of their particular situations and the applicability of theoretical approaches is added into the mix. There are levels of understanding in each of the individual, the institutional and the societal significance of their views and opinions.

Chapters 4 to 6 are narratives of my participants' stories, which reflect the material arising from the two interviews a year apart that I conducted with each of them. The first in chapter 4 is Kay's story and this takes us from her first thinking about becoming a governor, through her early impressions and follows her through the term of her governorship. It was, overall, not a happy or successful experience which can draw on the writings of Honneth (1995) to illuminate it. In exploring this story, Kay's reflections on the factors as she saw them, gives insight to the interplay between her own outlook, the form of the governing body and the personalities of the school leaders. Ethical issues were apparent with Kay's interviews as she was someone with whom I had a pre-existing friendship.

Alison is the subject of the second narrative and a strong feminist element is apparent in her decisions. In Chapter 5 she traces her long service as a governor to her background and upbringing and also identifies those aspects of her own domestic circumstances which led her to engage in the role. Between the first interview with her and the second a year later, the emotions she talked about in relation to governorship changed markedly. After what had been a difficult year her optimism and resilience had been sorely tested.

Thomas talks in Chapter 6. As an Afro-Caribbean man, his experience as a governor foregrounds racial issues at times. His story is one of long service and constant changes in the schools in which he was a governor. Being head-hunted for his involvement in the beginning was just the start of his governing journey and he found himself in demand throughout his history of being on a governing body. His motivation was

different as he seemed to search for, and rise to, challenges either from the parent body, the other governors or the staff.

Chapter 7 is my own story. Using auto/biographical methods for this research, the necessity of exploring my own emotional and rational reasons for becoming and staying a governor were clear. This was important to help me, as an analyst, understand the drives of others; to be more able to compare my experience with theirs and to share the difficulties of expressing such a complex concept as motivation. It is an evolving story, as are those of all my participants, and proved complex to access, raised ethical issues in the writing and was full of choices at every step about which truths to select to tell. Volunteering has been a major part of my life story and career.

Chapter 8 draws together the findings arising from the narrative chapters across the micro, meso and macro levels, including the dominant themes and main differences between the participants' experiences. By definition, the auto/biographical narratives were very varied but there were some common reasons given for motivation that are explored in more depth, some assumptions about why people engage in this voluntary activity needed to be challenged and some marked difference occur which have implications for future policy and practice. This chapter also highlights important issues which arose out of the narratives which relate to the auto/biographical research methodology and required supplementary reflection and understanding. They concerned issues around auto/biography and how it relates to theory; friendship and its complicating factors; the role of fictional representation of material and feminist and creative approaches. These were all issues that demanded more attention after the material was gathered as deeper implications became clearer. The importance of my growth as a reflexive researcher is summarised and the development of my professional identity is explored.

Chapter 9 is the conclusion to the thesis where the significance as a contribution to knowledge is underlined including the unique features of the research, pointers for future explorations and my learning as a researcher. The Appendices contain examples of my personal journal entries; the ethical consent form; an extract from a transcript of an interview, an illustration of the initial stage of analysis and the proforma used to facilitate analysis.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2: Literature review.

a) Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the writers, theorists or concepts that informed this research into the motivation of school governors as an example of civic engagement contributing to social solidarity. The chapter sets the research in the context of existing theory, showing how and why the work, which arose directly from my own volunteering as a governor, was conceived and its future significance. Historical writing is included to establish the context for the circumstances of the present.

Firstly my **research positioning** is outlined indicating my philosophy. The need for **researcher reflexivity** is then explained and this is followed an description of how that occurred. An overview is then displayed showing the multidisciplinary nature of the literature consulted to clearly delineate the theoretical themes and concepts which inform this inquiry. The chapter provides a review of relevant existing knowledge and highlights the **theoretical themes** that were significant to this type of voluntary activity. Each thread is summarised and its relevance to the research explained. The key authors referred to are Honneth, Goffman and Putnam. Honneth's writing about the psychological and social aspects of recognition apply to aspects of the narratives of my participants. Goffman's examination of the sociological aspects of human behaviour offers illumination to the roles inhabited by governors and Putnam's analysis of the role of volunteering in the United States gives useful insights which can be translated into motivation in the UK. The chapter continues with an outline of influences from **feminism** and ends with a **conclusion** about the way these theoretical influences have elucidated my positioning.

The review of literature is framed by the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis which C. Wright Mills used in *The Sociological Imagination* (2000). In doing so, this research is distinguished from other work and establishes my unique position and authority in the specific area of the motivation of school governors as an example of community engagement. Community here means people allied in groups with which they identify for some common purpose or characteristic e.g. geographical location. The term civic comes from the Latin root *civis* meaning city and civic refers to the rights and duties of a citizen.

To be clear about the boundaries I established, this was not research into the role of the individual upon governing bodies per se, as explained in Chapter 1. It focused instead on the reverse: on the role being a governor plays in the life of the individual.

Accordingly I have not explored the efficacy of individual governors or of governing bodies or of the role of governing bodies vis-a-vis the school. There has been some research into these aspects, but it is a hard matter to compute and evaluate because of the difficulty in separating the impact of the governors from other influences on a school. Generally however, research into outstanding schools credits a good governing body as a factor which contributes to the standard of education provided.

The literature that does exist on governors is limited in size and scope. Research is limited to certain aspects of governorship, mainly related to the work of the educational establishment. Governing bodies are seen as a cog in the wheel of the life of the school, can be obstructive or helpful overall and can have a pivotal role in the ethos of the school and the performance of the institution. Governors and their activities have rarely been foregrounded in research work, particularly of the qualitative kind. One example was from the Department of Education, responsible for schools in the UK. Their research looked into the effectiveness of school governing bodies which was based on interviews with staff and governors and presented as a series of case studies (Ofsted, 2011).

Inevitably, my views, interpretation and analysis were formed over many years and through a mixture of experience and exposure to ideas and authors, both through literature and theory. The forming of a consciousness and a self is necessarily complicated and multi-layered. I am of the view that a composite of my genetic inheritance, family background, early upbringing, cultural milieu and later life experiences have constructed my identity. However, I was given pause for thought when talking to a scientist about the nature of the real inner person, as I received the answer from her that at base level, any person is only a complex collection of cells. This was a sobering retort. Through the limbic system these cells control our motivation, emotions, learning, understanding, memory and therefore our thoughts and actions (Pinker, 1997). This is the reductionist argument for the least we are, but to explain the complexities of the decision to engage in voluntary activity for example, there is a wealth of development and experience, contingent on background environment and influenced through relationships, resulting in an outlook and a persona which informs

such choices. There is a meshed and iterative process at play in all of us. This literature review unpicks the workings of this process.

Research that has been carried out focuses on the role of the governors as part of the school's achievement vis-a-vis its pupils and their attainment. The volunteer oversight by governors of the work of the Head Teacher and the school is considered helpful as an element to support, challenge and oversee the work of the leadership team (DfE, 2016). Existing research is often in the form of questionnaire responses and is rarely far along the qualitative scale of methodology. A recent exception is the broadly ethnographic study by Young (2016) looking at the decision-making process in governing bodies which painted a highly critical picture of sluggish governing bodies, with little decision-making going on and part of the leadership of the school more in the breach than the act. Young describes unfamiliar governors engaged in fairly pointless activity,

The considerable powers and duties which school GBs [Governing Bodies] have in the running of schools mean that these findings have significant implications. The norms described in this article mean that their workings are not as inclusive, active, deliberative and creative as they should be. GBs are therefore poorly positioned to question dominant discourses of education, such as the current national performative system (Young, 2016, p. 11).

In terms of the implications for the use to which my research can be put, given the shortage of candidates for governors nationally, understanding the impetus to put one's name forward to be a governor could be helpful in targeting others to do the same. Similarly, where retention of governors is difficult, the results of this research could provide increased understanding of factors that could aid retention by increasing the meaning and satisfaction obtained from the role. Both of these elements could be useful in policy terms and could be of great significance to the practical aspects of how to harness motivation to recruit, induct and work with governors to improve retention rates.

What follows describes areas of literature that proved useful for understanding the historical development of human association and co-operation, the existing societal context and the issues arising out of the research. The authors referenced illuminated the act of volunteering and helped to make sense of the information gathered from my participants about the role. I explored what had been written in relation to governorship

and the research questions to establish the existing picture with regard to community engagement.

I wanted to find out what motivated people to become school governors and what encouraged them to stay as such and to see how this aspect of voluntary activity related to community engagement more widely. At the macro level I explored why participation in a community was vital in the wider sociological context. This necessitated studying a broad spectrum of literature covering several different disciplines and the chosen theoretical influences reflect this.

This literature review reflects my understanding of previous writing related to my work. It begins with an outline of the historical context which informed the research. This includes an analysis of the development identifying community, community engagement and social solidarity as key sociological concepts. In addition, I analysed the current context and setting in which the research took place to situate it in a time of flux and looked to the future of such an activity. The literature that was most relevant consisted of three intersecting paths: that of individual motivation and psychological identity, on the intersection between individual and society including cultural and social capital and community, and on the practice and theory of societal solidarity and community cohesion.

b) Research positioning

My serious engagement with literature has been one of the joys of this research. The first stage of my work was to explore ideas through reading around the methodological issues whilst I conducted the research. Much of the preliminary desk research involved reading about the developments in the last 20 years of the narrative 'turn' and auto/biographical research. This afforded me insights into the literature around qualitative interviewing and broadened the scope of methods of accessing the narratives of others. In this respect it was important to be open-minded about which areas provided new intellectual avenues to explore.

There needs to be understanding of a self to be motivated. Social interactionists such as Mead, described in Giddens and Sutton (2014), saw a social self ('me') which could be externally influenced and shaped through interactions with others and an active self ('I') which was more internally given to reacting to the external world. Together Mead thought these two concepts created identity or the self, which grew and adapted with each interaction with others in groups. Blumer (2002) identified that human identity is

partly formed as a result of the relationships between individuals which can develop over a lifetime as well as by those unique thoughts, feelings and desires invested in any one person.

Taking these concepts further, Giddens (1991) contributed:

Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. This includes the cognitive component of personhood. To be a person is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others) (1991, p. 53).

My professional careers background has led to an understanding of the real hard power of narrative for opening up and drawing out this cognition. Careers guidance is predicated on this. West (1996) in *Beyond Fragments*, looking at the motivation to gain education, describes four psychological approaches, namely: lifecycle theory; a hierarchy of needs after Maslow; personality traits and decision-making theory (West, 1996, pp. 6 - 8). His dissatisfaction with these approaches concludes that these are explanations of activity and choice rather than analysing reasons for those choices with any regard for personal histories. His conclusion is that a more psychosocial explanation is needed: that which brings together an understanding of the psychological as well as the social factors in unison. Phillips (1988/2007) indicates how we can imagine that this could represent a building on Winnicott's notion of transitional space. Phillips, citing Winnicott, describes such a space as:

... an intermediate area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute, and it exists as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related (1988/2007, p. 119).

If we use this concept to apply to governing bodies, motivation might be full of the possibilities for flourishing where it becomes an outcome of acts of courage and learned agency in persevering in times of difficulty or distress.

c) Researcher reflexivity

A core concept in this inquiry is researcher reflexivity. Reflexivity in research is seen as a process of change and development and was defined by Hunt and Sampson (2006) as involving:

Creating an internal space, distancing ourselves from ourselves, as it were, so that we are both 'inside' and 'outside' ourselves simultaneously and able to switch back and forth fluidly and playfully from one position to the other, giving ourselves up to the experience of 'self as other' whilst also retaining a grounding in our familiar sense of self (2006, p. 4).

Reflexivity is important because of the co-constructed nature of the interaction. A narrative arising from an interview has been steered, affected and prompted in various verbal and non-verbal ways by the researcher. To fully identify this and to be as clear as possible about the influences at play, a level of thought and analysis has to be carried out by the researcher. Understanding what the researcher may have contributed and brought to the table can assist illuminating the story itself.

Interviewers now routinely seek reflexively to trace how, often in the most subtle ways, they have jointly acted to construct the narrative which has emerged from the encounter (Salmon and Riessman, in Andrews et al. 2009, p. 80).

Hunt and Sampson talk of the importance of reflexivity for researchers but they go further in saying that it is important in the writing process for the practising writer to recognise the unique bodily experience which informs and directs feelings and attitudes (2006, p. 178).

McCormack and Ryan (2011) describe how reflexive attitude is essential for guidance counselling. They write that reflexivity is: *a disciplined commitment to a regular and skilled scrutiny* (2011, p. 9). This implies a self-scrutiny and the scrutiny of our peers. Certainly in my professional role I use reflexive practice as a basic skill to facilitate constructive, creative relationships with clients on a daily basis.

How to access this reflective state is suggested by Hunt and Sampson (2006) as involving that space between the conscious and unconscious where we are both alert to our sensations and emotions and also focused on what we are seeing and hearing. It is this combination of awareness of the outer world of the other, together with that of our inner world of response and reaction, that can open up a deeper understanding of an

interaction. Some of the varied methods of achieving or increasing reflexivity are using journals; encouraging feedback from clients and participants; working with peers including those from other countries and with other traditions; through discussions in supervision and using creative methods to reframe the issues (which I have written about in Chapter 3 of this research).

As McCormack and Ryan (2011) make clear, this means we need to understand the wider organisational, community and social contexts of the lives of our clients as well as the frames of reference with which we listen to them. They quote Etherington (2004):

To be reflexive we need to be aware of our personal responses and to be able to make choices about how to use them. We also need to be aware of the personal, social and cultural contexts in which we live and work and to understand how these impact on the ways we interpret our world (2004, p. 19).

In careers guidance as in academic research it is imperative to fully understand the whole range of influencing factors in an interaction. Narrative retelling of a career and life story is the way that I work with clients to understand them. If I, with my mannerisms, presence and words, am influencing the telling of the story, I need to be able to perceive that influence. I also need to be aware of any non-verbal issues and elements that might need to be factored into my understanding and any ensuing feedback.

Plummer (2001) suggests methods of questioning the self to start to uncover some of the latent or hidden issues under the surface. In this research two main areas warranted a serious attempt at reflexivity. The pre-existing friendship between me and one of my participants threw up difficulties in unknowing what I already knew about her and her life. The ethical issue of how to stick to the material which had arisen from the research proved difficult if not impossible. The other issue was, with such an in-depth qualitative study, how to effectively anonymise the text. I spent time analysing the difficulties I was having and used my research journals to describe these hurdles. I wrote about them extensively in the resulting thesis in Chapter 8 in order to acknowledge and make clear the complexities of such work to the reader.

d) Theoretical themes

It was difficult to decide on key theorists until the end of the research when I was writing up my thesis. For a long time I was puzzled by supervisors' exhortations to find

my 'theoretical friends' whose work could inform and illuminate my writing as there seemed so many authors who offered something and none who illuminated everything. Eventually I understood that finding such a neat synergy was unlikely unless specifically studying one particular theorist and that instead of trying to shoe-horn authors into my work and strain to demonstrate relevance, it was preferable to find links that emerged and have several theoretical friends. This is a product of the kind of real-life research conducted that does not fit neatly into any particular arena of literature and indeed encroaches into more than one discipline. In my material the narratives and experiences of the participants reveal personal aspects of their motivation as well as raising issues about aspects of the group involvement as a governor. The whole macro plane of the role of volunteering in society is another area in which the study is located and which has conclusions to offer.

Neither social theories nor psychology alone seemed satisfactory as a theoretical base for this work and some way of incorporating the different disciplines at play seemed important. So this research offers multi-perspectivism, with phenomena approached with impressions and ideas from varied disciplinary directions, each to further illuminate what may be occurring. Using the levels of micro, meso and macro helped to tease out the important complex interplay between the differences between the individual, the organisation and society as a whole.

Accordingly a full understanding of who are my theoretical friends, those whose writing enlightens and clarifies my thinking, came at the last stages of the research when considering the best way to position and set the research into a wider frame. This echoes the research by Hodkinson in which he described the need to fully explore a subject before being able to find an appropriate theoretical frame with which to surround it:

Consequently, we searched for and read that literature late on in the research process, after our own theorising was already well developed (Hodkinson, 1998, p. 567).

This research, as all research, is historically located. The time of life, work and experiences of my participants and myself, the time of the research interviews and the time of the writing up of the findings are all influenced by the historical circumstances in which we exist.

Given the multi-disciplinary nature of this research, there were necessarily many authors who could contribute relevant theoretical approaches to illuminate my analysis. C. Wright Mills illuminated the scope of the research overall and the three authors whose ideas resonated most on aspects of my topic were Goffman, Honneth and Putnam. These three main theorists provided insights which are detailed later in this chapter. Providing academic work across 70 years, their writing spans very different decades: the 50s, 90s and 2000s respectively and their writing concerns the two very different continents of America and Europe. Examples from the feminist canon such as Stanley (1992) and Richardson (1997) are included as significant contributors to the research methodology and to the findings, as they locate my intellectual positioning.

Micro level

The three delineators or micro, meso and macro are not mutually exclusive and like many broad categories, imply a separation between them that does not exist in reality, but they have a use in enabling a distinction to be made between different ideas. The micro level represents the smallest or lowest level, describing the effect of governorship on the individual and vice versa. Motivation was explicitly used in the research questions and as such deserves attention to explain it as a complex and contested concept. Motivation concerns the individual urges, hidden purposes and wants that propel an individual into one series of choices and one way of life rather than another. As such the term is bound up with the identity of the person with the motivation.

In this research I wanted to find out from my participants how they would describe their own motivation to join a governing body and to see how the experience itself had shaped them and influenced their motivation to stay involved, or not. This was to be a transitional space for them to define the facts that were important for themselves with no external parameters put around that. I was looking to generate some theory, some form of explanation, to build a thesis of motivation which could apply to school governorship.

Goffman

The study of society throws up angles on the actions and thinking of humans in groups in society, concerning their social lives, that can be refreshing and helpful in the study of behaviours. Erving Goffman was Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in the USA. A Canadian by nationality, his father was a Ukrainian Jew

who immigrated in 1922. Goffman's writing overarches both ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism and his work was relevant to the research methodology used as well as to the findings of this research. Goffman's work is from 1959 but it still resonates in terms of individuals exhibiting different personas for changed situations. Goffman was interested in the small details of demeanor, image, speech and behaviour that took place between individuals. He studied and described the nature of these interactions.

Discovering Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* which lay out ideas about dramaturgy proved interesting and resonated with one of my professional roles as a careers adviser teaching presentation skills, drawing on the actor within. My first reading of this work saw me nodding in agreement as the words echoed not only what I had experienced but also what I taught other people about how to perform in career and life roles. During such training I exhort participants to manifest a confident persona to see them through executing a presentation or speech to cover their nerves and hesitation. Goffman made the everyday events recognisable and worth studying. This brings to mind Mills (2000) exhortation to make the familiar strange in order to be fully analytical.

The reported personality of Goffman also has its attractions. He was known as a maverick who:

...bears a great disdain for theory-talk, but an abiding love for theory, for thought about the way the world works (Lofland, 1984 in Jacobson, 2010, p. 12).

His reluctance to be categorised and pigeon-holed, his sharp humour and above all, his flair with words and eloquent writing style made his work instantly applicable and thought-provoking. His work is potent still; punchy and relevant - a classic. As Smith noted:

For some, Goffman's writings represent the sociological imagination at its finest: his analyses are innovative, informative, even entertaining (Smith, 1999, p. 118).

Smith's reference is to C Wright Mills' classic work, *The Sociological Imagination* (2000).

Goffman was writing in the 1950s and 60s in a very different temporal context to that of today. The now commonplace acceptance of the concept of having many personas which we adopt according to our situation and particular position, resonates. His conversational style and lack of explicit theoretical boundaries and his framing of the everyday as worthy of examination and exploration gives many ways of linking his work to this research.

Goffman thought that all human activity resembled a performance. He cites Robert Park:

It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role. ... It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves (Park, 1950, cited in Goffman, 1959, p. 30).

Goffman's identification of the different personas within us all reverberates still as aspects of our interests and backgrounds influence what we hear, say and write. Goffman explores the everyday occurrences and interactions between individuals. He examines the way we express signals about ourselves. In addition to our direct utterances, we also make statements through our visual expressions, our body language, our dress and our non-verbal communication. We can and do alter these signals to manage the impression we are making on others and others are doing the same to us all the time. This behaviour is not, says Goffman, just for formal or important occasions such as at a job interview, but 'in everyday life'. So our normal behaviour is a flow of such alterations, adjustments and signalling in order to survive and thrive in any complex, fast-moving society with its plethora of fellow actors to deal with and a myriad different choices to navigate.

Goffman (1959) first explicitly adapted the idea of dramaturgy from the theatre into sociology through his work. He paid homage to the work of Burke, a contemporary (Ibid., p. 74). Goffman goes far beyond talking of dramatic touches in life but picks up Burke's (1966) ideas of life itself being a drama where humans by nature see and interpret situations totally as dramatic interventions, in the same way as actors perform in character on the stage, relating in turn to other actors in their respective roles and interacting at different times to different people in different ways.

Goffman's work divided readers about the worth of his conclusions. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* is written as a stream of descriptive explanation, and it creates an extended metaphor for life lived in dramatic and theatrical terms. Goffman was a social interactionist, who examined relationships and interactions between people in terms of different metaphorical frameworks such as the theatre, the ritual, the game and the frame. The use of these various metaphors in his writing was an example of multi-perspectivism, with phenomena approached with impressions and ideas from many different disciplinary directions, each shedding light on what may be occurring. To Goffman we are all actors and the context in which we are performing is all-important. In this his work does not read as a theoretical exposition as it does not provide any explanation for different actions and does not claim to, accordingly it can only properly be described as a theoretical framework for identifying, considering and analysing social interaction.

We are more used to the multi-actor ensemble cast or troupe of actors working together to deliver a theatrical production. However, playwrights have occasionally used the single actor on the stage as an experimental device, reducing the action to a single person or duos. A noted example of a playwright using this kind of dramatic presentation is Samuel Beckett (1986) in his work *Krapps Last Tape* which features one single actor for the whole play. This is developed to an even greater degree with his more radically presented play, *Not I* where a solitary mouth appears on the stage to speak the words, with the rest of the body and face hidden in a completely blacked-out stage. Other less stark examples are Alan Bennett's series entitled *Talking Heads* (2007). These ground-breaking monologues each feature one character talking direct to the audience/camera telling their story. In his introduction to the collection of 12 of these plays Bennett says that watching a monologue on the screen is closer to reading a short story than watching a 'proper' play (2007, p. 40).

It is with this dramatic form that conducting research interviews can most closely be aligned with these dramaturgical or dramatisitic views. The understanding that the sharing of the interview experience is fundamental to the outcomes is an important keystone for choosing auto/biographical interviews as the methodology. Identifying and making clear the different influences at play are a necessary part of depicting the results of the research.

The significance of Goffman's observations is enduring and merits being re-interpreted for use with each new generation of academics. A valuable contribution is made by *The Contemporary Goffman*, a reader edited by Jacobsen (2010) which brings Goffman up-to-date by interpreting his writing in relation to current issues. Jacobsen points out the enduring relevance of Goffman's new way of seeing and analysing human behaviour:

Through such redescriptive metaphorical lenses, social life is made more transparent as well as more tangible to social researchers and their readership (Jacobsen, 2010, p. 19).

Goffman did not provide sociology with a systematic theory, method or paradigm but rather Jacobsen as contends:

... he provided the discipline with a 'perspective' that contained a multitude of important theoretical, methodological and conceptual insights into a variety of aspects of social life as well as into how to investigate it (Jacobsen, 2010, p. 15).

So although his work neither decisively explained or provided a method of predicting human behavior, it enabled the reader to see the benefit and the necessity of exploring all of human interrelationships however detailed or seemingly trivial.

In this Goffman can be seen as a forerunner of subsequent new work, where daily routines studied in ethnomethodology and domestic realms of feminism follow on. He summed up his belief in watching the subjects of his research rather than asking them about the episode:

Not, then, men [sic] and their moments. Rather moments and their men. (Goffman, 1967, p. 3).

Jacobson (2010) describes Goffman's focus being,

... the poetics of presenting scientific material even of the apparently most unscientific nature. Indeed, he was one of the first to proclaim the micro-social world and all its myriad interminglings a realm worthy of serious academic attention, ... (Jacobson, 2010, p. 3).

Applying Goffman's thinking and the theatrical analogy to auto/biographical narrative research which involves just two protagonists is relevant in two ways. First, in the

research relationship between the researcher and the research participants there is a complex and fluctuating interaction which will influence the outcome of the interview.

performers can stop giving expressions but cannot stop giving them off
(Goffman 1959, p. 108).

In terms of research interviews, even when nothing is being said by either the researcher or the participant, thoughts, feelings and attitudes are being expressed through body language, that which is not said, facial expressions and pauses (Corfield Tee, 2016).

The second way that Goffman is relevant is that the governors in this research were talking about their motivation vis-a-vis a certain role in their lives. They were retelling this experience at the individual or micro level. Goffman (1959) was exploring the way that an individual relates to the group or society with which he or she interrelates. He talked about the way that we, players and audience members, affect each other in the production of relating to each other and then make micro adjustments in turn.

Two of the research participants referred to the difference in the world of being a school governor compared to their previous roles, and the difficulties of fitting in to this new role. They specifically mentioned the use of acronyms and professional jargon in governor meetings which only obfuscated the issues being discussed, to the extent that it sometimes seemed as if a different language was being spoken. The resulting role dissonance led to a lack of confidence to enter this new world and feelings of diffidence about whether they could make any useful contribution. One participant avidly agreed that she was definitely assuming a role when she was a governor and I recognise this in my own actions when I consciously inhabit the persona of the governor when enacting that part. The significance of the way we perceive and interpret language, gestures and expressions are all concerned with signs and signals. Looking at resilient adult learners' reasons for persistence and determination in the face of difficulties and trials, Hoult explored narratives of individual strength and confidence to keep on keeping on (Hoult, 2012).

Meso level

Honneth

Axel Honneth is a German Professor of Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt who grew up in Essen, West Germany. This sociologist and critical theorist wrote of the

significance of the psychosocial quest for love, recognition and respect at the micro, meso and macro levels respectively. He has written extensively about the human need for respect from others to encourage participation in society at increasing depth. Honneth's writing focuses on social-political and moral philosophy, with a focus on interpersonal relationships and the significance of the search for close relationships with others. One of his core arguments is for the need to understand the psychological dynamic in relationships in order to be able to accurately interpret social relations. This includes the results of the lack of recognition as a cause of interpersonal conflict and social dysfunctionality (Honneth, 2007). Honneth was seeking to describe the motivation for individuals' human flourishing. He looked at the behaviour of people in families, in groups and in public life. His work sought to explain what makes people perform in groups and in more formal roles in society. This is directly relevant to the research in terms of people putting themselves forward to become school governors both in relation to their desire to join a group and what they may eventually get from, and contribute to, such a role.

The meso or intermediate level represents that of the institution or group such as the way governors interact with a school, particularly the relevance of the way collections of people work together and affect each other's behaviour and outcomes. Honneth's (1995) ideas about the need for recognition and validation provided a significant influential frame for the way the individual relates to institutions and society. The lack of such recognition enabled increased understanding too, because not every experience of governing in this research was a success or even satisfying. Honneth's psychosocial ideas cross boundaries between the motivators of the individual and his or her relations with the group and society. I have placed Honneth in the meso category as a result, as this can be seen as a bridging category between the individual micro and wider society macro levels.

Building on the work of Freud, Honneth wrote about Freud's anthropological conception of individual self-relation where the origin of 'normal' anxiety is in the original separation of the infant from the parent, which occurs significantly earlier in humans than in other mammals. He awards Freud a significant role in understanding the human psyche,

But then there is a threat – and this is my thesis – of losing that element of Freudian theory which comprises its central legacy, one still valid today

beyond all parts that have in the meantime become questionable: the insight that, to begin with, the human is always a divided, inwardly ruptured being, yet one which, thanks to its inherent interest in extending its “inner” freedom, has the ability to reduce or even overcome that rupturedness through its own reflective activity (Honneth, 2009, p. 127).

Humans aim to work through their deep-seated anxieties through reflexivity – by analysing their own biography. It is this same level of conscious and unconscious divisions in all of us that prompts the neediness which can be satisfied through recognition from others,

The human self-relation, as Freud’s great insight can be summarized, consists in the process of self-appropriation of one’s will by affectively admitting to anxiety (Honneth, 2009, p. 145).

Honneth was also influenced by the psychoanalyst and paediatrician, Winnicott (1971) and drew on his object-relations theory to describe the successful child-rearing which gave rise to a confident adult. The use of a transitional object, which could be a literal object such as a toy or blanket, as part of the necessary separation between infant and parent is a key concept,

Transitional objects and transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion which is at the basis of initiation of experience. This early stage of development is made possible by the mother’s special capacity for making adaptation to the needs of her infant, thus allowing the infant the illusion that what the infant creates really exists (Winnicott, 1971, p. 19).

Careers guidance can be seen to be a transitional space for a deep level of analysis of one’s auto/biography. The relationship between the careers counsellor and the client facilitates the reflection and reflexivity that are essential for gaining the confidence needed for personal development.

The idea of the research interview representing a transitional space makes use of Winnicott’s notion of transitional spaces as safe and useful environments between the self and the world, in which to enable reflection, identify change and make decisions. Winnicott’s (1971) ‘good enough’ concept of mothering could be seen to be relevant to governing. By ‘good enough’ with regard to child-rearing, Winnicott was moving away from a good/bad dichotomy to illustrate that the management of an infant’s growing

independence and abilities could take many different forms, any of which could properly facilitate the conflict and tension which is a natural part of the eventual and necessary separation of mother and child.

In governance there is a body of peers and a leader or Chair. They work as a group comprised of individuals who all have emotional needs and expectations. Individual governors can come to the group bringing their own emotional literacy or their own anxieties and unresolved emotional issues. The concept of transference and counter-transference could also come to bear when new governors commence their role and have to navigate the new environment in which they find themselves. This environment can be truly foreign, with incomprehensible terms, bureaucratic structures and technical terms abounding. Feelings of distrust and alienation can cause dismay and confusion at best and hostility at worst, as feelings of inadequacy can be transferred to the group who can react back in turn. It may be that governors who find it problematic to work in and with the team are suffering from difficulties in feeling and communicating and in coping with the response that they generate through their actions (Ibid., p. 13). Certainly there is a complex balance in governing which needs an overview of the issues through complex and detailed discussions, rather than the micro-management of the work, as the latter is carried out by the senior management team and staff. Some people find it difficult not to have control over what is done in a school and are uncomfortable about 'letting go' of the management and implementation issues that are more properly left to the staff.

Honneth interpreted Hegel for whom love represented the basis of reciprocal recognition and saw the fundamental importance of love in human flourishing and will formation (Honneth, 1995, p. 95). Without being shown love, humans would be unable to feel confident and able to act agentically in relationships. Accordingly Honneth described three levels of recognition. The first level of recognition he specified was in the family group, where, all being well, people receive love and acceptance from their closest relatives. Through these loving relationships wherein the child is heard and valued, a healthy sense of self develops, which leads to lifelong feelings of basic self-confidence, a self-love in effect. Winnicott (1971) wrote about the same process where 'good enough' mothering would enable a child to thrive. It is this essential recognition as a loveable child, close to loving parents and also developed as a separate and agentic individual, that allows a complete identity to be inhabited. It is this sense of self that enables an individual to respect themselves, a quality imperative for joining with others

in groups or communities. The respected individual, sure of his or her worth, can combine together with fellow men and women to act and create in groups. This makes sense as any group activity needs members confident enough to ask for help, admit to being wrong and to listen to the points of view of others. This is certainly true of governing bodies. It also implies that governors do not need to be expert in all things, just 'good enough' in Winnicott's term to work well in a team with their peers.

In social groups, at the meso level, people can gain recognition for their contribution to the group both in terms of feeling included and treated equally and due to the work which gets done in unison. Governing also conveys a certain status, mainly within the school environment itself, as part of the leadership structure. Governors are not very visible to the wider population but the governing body is recognised in the school community at least, and they have credibility as a group. For Honneth this recognition implies being known and belonging, at a certain level, having a place in a world with others. Respect is afforded as well as being received.

I quickly understood the aptness of Honneth's theoretical approach in terms of the clients I saw in my professional practice, who articulated a need for being valued and recognised in their careers and education, as part of my work was to help them appreciate their own value. It took longer for me to grasp how this approach was relevant to community engagement, specifically governing. Speaking of love and self-respect seemed a stretch away from the plain and cold realities of termly governors' meetings. However, if recognition was so important as dynamic interplay between people at every level, it begged the question of how much, if any, attention is paid to this in governance?

Another author who contributes to understanding at the meso level is Bourdieu. His work on habitus, disposition and social capital, or that expectation that individuals have about what they are used to, where they fit in and what they have to offer, can explain how a governing body can be an alien environment. With business practices, formal bureaucracy in meetings, educational jargon and technical and legal terms abounding, adding in to that mix a sea of white faces when a new governor is from an ethnic minority or all-male meetings when one is the lone female, and it is not hard to see how some might feel *a fish out of water* to use Bourdieu's term (Grenfell, 2012).

Macro level

The macro level is the highest level, in terms of this research, with the widest view of societal impact and significance. Its relevance is particularly in terms of community involvement and development. Honneth's (1995) thesis is that humans are motivated by the search for different levels of recognition and this drives them to increase the depth of their contribution and involvement with society. Honneth's third level of recognition was self-esteem, that sense of being valued which allows for a contribution to be made and spoken of with others. We need to feel valued, Honneth argues, in order to be able to properly recognise the contribution of others, and this, when reciprocated, in turn enhances social solidarities in a virtuous spiral. At the macro level, with success comes respect from others for making a difference and this is the highest level of feedback people can gain. As the degree of their recognition grows they will be able to recognise the other, which increases the level of recognition. Honneth certainly did not mean this in any narcissistic way, rather that it would result in a strengthening of the whole community. Interestingly two of my research participants, had received overt recognition for their governing work, with the receipt of societal honours of some kind, which would fit into this macro level of acknowledgement. The extent to which these honours motivated them is explored in the later narrative chapters about Alison and Thomas.

But what of the context in which these different levels of governing experience are being generated? For the experiences of individual governors will vary with the different times and the predominant social mores depending on when and where they are situated. Political decisions during the last ten years have wrought a seismic change in the educational landscape, with control of school management transferring to semi-autonomous boards with the Academisation programme in the UK through the passing of the Academies Act 2010 by the Coalition Conservative/Liberal Democrat government. Arguably this has made the role of the governors both more significant and more visible.

Biesta's (2011) 'learning democracy' focus was on the inculcation of citizenship in the young as the necessary precursor of agentic democratic participation. He linked policy relating to volunteering more recently, as a shadow of the wider dominant political attitudes. The UK's Prime Minister Cameron's initiative of the *Big Society* launched in the 2010 UK general election by the Conservative Party centered on empowering

people and communities to be self-directing and agentic in contrast to a centralising government (UK Government, 2010). In this way volunteering was an addition to the minimised, centrally-provided social infrastructure and was designed to off-set and cushion against the effects of austerity measures. By the fostering of a caring edge to society, some protection could be gained for the casualties of a harsher economic model although how much this actually offset the hurt and damage of austerity and neo-liberalism is debatable. The needs of the economy triumphed over the needs of humans to “learn to be” as called for by Faure in his UNESCO Report (1972). Biesta makes the link between a society which fosters learning for pleasure and growth and the flourishing of democratic involvement:

...empowerment and emancipation of individuals so that they become able to live their lives with others in more democratic, just and inclusive ways – which again, is not only important for the well-being of individuals but for the quality of democratic life itself as well (Biesta, 2011, p. 63).

Partly as a result of the writing and actions of reformers such as Dewey and the remit of the Workers Educational Association, mid-twentieth century socialists developed and celebrated the adult education movement although some deplored its reformist nature, thinking it would temper any chance of revolutionary spirit which needed only the teaching of labour history and struggle to be ignited. Corfield details the complex historical development of the workers’ education movement and the overt ideological struggles between educationalists and revolutionaries which it harboured (Corfield, 1969).

Biesta (2011) references Pattie’s (2004) analysis of reasons for civic involvement, delineating broadly between forms of civic attitudes and behaviours that are individually driven and those that are more structurally encouraged. This does raise the question of what is the nature of democracy? There are various forms of democracy but citizens’ participation in a liberal democracy such as in the U.K. at the minimum requires a cross in a box on a ballot paper. Democratic involvement can take different forms such as voting for a representative as in the UK parliamentary system, but there are also direct means of exercising democracy such as referenda and other participative measures, normally on single issues. At its most sophisticated, some people make their living through politics, either as elected politicians or as officials and in-between are a myriad of roles of involvement in political decision-making, either formally through

membership of organised pressure groups or informally through signatures on petitions, letters to MPs or attendance at meetings. Biesta (2011) also writes that modern forms of democratic involvement include discussions with friends, social media 'likes' and 'shares', and reading about politics.

Biesta (Ibid.) marshals evidence to show that citizenship is flourishing although exhibited as more individual actions and less group orientated. He describes civic learning, that education that is necessary to participate fully as active citizens in a democracy, as a non-linear, recursive and cumulative experience and one which needs to contribute to civic subjectivity and agency. He argues that there is a necessary relationship between citizenship, democracy and knowledge, that democracy is fluid and contextual and cannot therefore be taught, it can only be fuelled as a desire,

This is the reason why the most significant forms of civic learning are likely to take place only through the processes and practices that make up the everyday lives of children, young people and adults and why the conditions that shape these processes and practices deserve our fullest attention if we really are concerned about the future of democratic citizenship and about the opportunities for democratic learning in school and society (Biesta, 2011, p. 98).

As described by Bauman, (2012) we live in an era of liquid modernity where increasing atomisation has led to alienation from previous group loyalties. Rapid technological change and insecure employment in postindustrial societies together with a weakening of the welfare system and a loosening of social bonds over the last 30 years, has led to a precarious existence for many. The resulting advancing sense of personal lack of meaning was highlighted by Giddens,

'Existential isolation' is not so much a separation of individuals from others as a separation from the moral resources necessary to live a full and satisfying existence. The reflexive project of the self generates programmes of actualisation and mastery. But as long as these possibilities are understood largely as a matter of the extension of the control systems of modernity to the self, they lack moral meaning. 'Authenticity' becomes both a pre-eminent value and a framework for self-actualisation, but represents a morally stunted process (Giddens, 1991, p. 9).

In such a climate, civic engagement becomes significant as a way of binding people and bridging individual concerns. The concept of citizenship is fluid. Social fracturing and the breaking of community bonds through decreased physical interaction has been exchanged with communing with others as an online presence with an increase in 'friends' and contacts and a reduction in intimates and allies. Sennett (2013) discusses the Facebook phenomenon where having 100s of 'friends' on this social networking platform is quite normal, at the same time as the number of friends one actually sees, or socialises with, shrinks.

Marquand's *Decline of the Public* (2004) describes the withering of the agora, the public domain, or those common meeting places wherein democratic communication flourished. Examples of the social structures that used to fulfil this function were adult education provision including that of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA); working men's clubs; trade unions, village halls and churches. For Marquand, the public realm is necessarily separate from both that of the market and the domestic or purely personal. Participation in the public realm is a skill that has to be learned through 'social learning'. School governance, requiring trust, debate and difference with equals, listening and negotiation, and conflict, compromise and coalition, is, at its best, an exemplar of that kind of activity and learning opportunity.

In Bauman's (2012) caustic and flowing treatise, he chronicles the disappearance of the agora or the public sphere:

... that intermediary, public/private site where life-politics meets Politics with the capital 'P', where private problems are translated into the language of public issues and public solutions are sought, negotiated and agreed for private troubles (Bauman, 2012, p. 39).

Understanding the full range of influences that are brought to bear in motivation involves working across academic disciplines. The personal drives and impetus which lead to volunteering in general and governing in particular necessitates examining literature around the psychological. But an individual does not exist in isolation and the role of a governor crosses into the world of and around, the institution of the school, which involves management structures, key audiences and complex multi-level inter-relationships. Any single institution does not operate on its own either and publicly-funded schools are part of the modern panorama of society. Their mores, history and policies have been developed over time as key institutions through which the young of

this society are educated, trained and socialised. These bastions of civic society need illuminating by the writing of sociologists who provide clarity about how they fit into society as a whole.

Weber, writing about political thought and action from the sociological viewpoint, defined a modern state as a compulsory association which exists to rationalise domination (Weber, 2015). He argued that political action can be vocational, in the sense of a career or way of life, or avocational in the sense of being practised occasionally, such as when casting a ballot or applauding or protesting in a 'political' meeting. The nucleus of political activity was the city as the arena for the action of the body politic or the political bodies, coming together, communicating, voting and decision-making. Weber talks of the need to pay those who wish to live off politics, whereas those who only practise decision-making occasionally need not be remunerated. In due course this thread would lead to Putnam (2000) on civic associations as the basis of effective democratic government.

Theoretical friends are those authors whose work informs and illuminates the research work. Historic ideas around public spaces and democratic debate such as Marquand (2004), Giddens (1991), Biesta (2011) and Bauman (2007; 2012) contributed to the contextual analysis. A more sociological strand was discovered in Putnam's (2000) *Bowling Alone* about the decline of civic community in the USA and Sennet's (2013) work on community engagement in the UK.

So what was the state of citizenship in the UK at the time of this research? Pattie et al's major empirical study of 2004 examined the meaning of citizenship in the early part of the 21st century by comprehensively surveying political participation and voluntary activities and the values which underpinned them. They defined civil society as:

...the formal and informal relationships between people which can be broadly defined as political but which operate outside the institutions of the state
(Pattie, 2004, p. 2).

They argued that the influence of globalisation, new nationalisms, mass immigration, multi-culturalism and environmental stress were changing the relationship between the individual and the state. The concept of the active citizen who both participated in, and abided by, the rules of the civic state, arose from ancient Greek city society.

Pattie et al's definition of citizenship was:

Citizenship is a set of norms, values and practices designed to solve collective action problems which involve the recognition by individuals that they have rights and obligations to each other if they wish to solve such problems. (2004, p. 22).

The authors looked at the sense of responsibility or civic duty, which could lead to the impetus to volunteer. Calling school governorship, along with standing for the local council, a more high-intensity form of participation, Pattie et al found that only a minority of people were willing to take on this level of responsibility as opposed to voting, going on jury duty or giving blood, which were seen as briefer, lower-intensity acts. Collective participation, acting in groups, was seen as having declined whilst individualistic democratic acts such as donating money, signing petitions, going on demonstrations, had increased. This implies a decline too in co-operation and interaction with strangers. Pattie et al point to the idea of: “consumer citizenship” to indicate the newer blend of increased awareness of rights with the decline in the need to participate in groups that involved the sorting out of issues. They concluded that the UK was full of atomised citizens, acting separately, as a result of having individualistic goals. The final appeal in the book is for formal citizenship education which should:

improve political knowledge, stimulate political interest and encourage voluntary activity, if it is imaginatively implemented (Pattie et al, 2004, p. 281).

Robert Putnam’s most famous work, *Bowling Alone*, (2000) argued that the USA has experienced an unprecedented collapse in social capital in the form of interpersonal, community and political life since the 1960s, with serious repercussions, mainly negative consequences for unity, satisfaction and cohesion. The evidence provided by Putnam is a meta-analysis of many discrete measures of involvement in different activities with groups in the USA. The resulting amalgam of data is an impressively wide and comprehensive snapshot of the diminishing of group endeavours, hence the title, bowling alone rather than participation in the bowling leagues of yester-year. Putnam and his researchers amalgamated published data and research across many different fields over a research journey that took eight years to complete. National census and survey results were joined with academic works and smaller private data collections to produce the finished work and his addendum to the book is a chapter explaining the people and organisations who had been part of this hugely ambitious data

collection project (Putnam, 2000). The work caused controversy as others argued that Putnam's collation of existing statistics did not properly substantiate his thesis.

Putnam's analysis of the state of community engagement argued that communities with strong civic norms and patterns of civic-minded behaviour are more active, healthy, crime-free, educated and possibly happier than communities without these norms and behaviour. In this extraordinarily rich text, activity across a very wide range of social contexts was examined. The coverage of different activities involving other people was extremely wide. Data from the most formal social grouping such as the Rotary Club, to the most informal, bowling parties, are described to illustrate the changes in community activity since the Second World War. Putnam looked at participation in politics from voting to political activism; standing as a candidate; participation in church and in the workplace via union activity; at informal social connections such as bowling and reading groups and socialising with friends and neighbours; voluntary work and philanthropic giving; attitudes of trust and reciprocal behaviour and at more recent developments such as internet activity and social movements via small groups. His ambition was to assess to what extent there was a cause to the decline in these civic engagement activities in the USA, and in the social capital that results from them. He posited several factors that could be significant particularly looking at social change in the family and the role of women, the prevalence of TV and the mass media, the changes in work and leisure balance and pressures of time and money and suburbanisation, and the rise of new information technology.

Putnam assessed changes in social capital, meaning networks between individuals and the benefits of trust and mutual dependence that go with them. The resulting sense of obligation between people was the key factor for Putnam, and these can be used for purposes that can be good or ill. He further distinguishes between the dimensions of bridging (inclusive networking between individuals which links groups e.g. recommendation for a job vacancy) and bonding (exclusive and tending to a narrow focus e.g. Country Club membership) (2000, p. 22). School governing is an example of a formally organised, repeated, intensive, activity with a specific public purpose and exclusive in its membership. In this sense it is a bonding activity between governors themselves but with a bridging dimension in that it works with the staff, pupils, parents and to a lesser extent, the local community around the school. Putnam amusingly describes the difference between the two thus:

Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD40 (2000, p. 23).

His aim was to identify what has happened to social capital over the 20th Century to see if these social bonds were weakened, different or just changed. The data gathered by Putnam ranged from the public and formal fora of politics and public affairs, through institutions linked to churches, clubs, communities and work, then the informal ties such as social groups, bowling leagues, picnics and parties and eventually to patterns of trust and altruism which included philanthropy and volunteering. He introduces the significance of the study in this way,

What is at stake is not merely warm, cuddly feelings or frissons of community pride. We shall review hard evidence that our schools and neighborhoods don't work so well when community bonds slacken, that our economy, our democracy, our health and happiness depend on adequate stocks of social capital (Putnam, 2000, p. 27).

For Putnam, the need for social capital was that it allowed citizens to resolve collective difficulties more easily. This echoes Mills' cry for the sociological imagination to help resolve human problems. Encouraging co-operation and the establishment of social norms by which people can live together harmoniously arises from increasing trust and trustworthiness which in turn lead to mutual confidence.

Putnam further delineates between two Jewish descriptors, *machers* who invest much time in the formal organisations in a community and *schmoozers* who have an active social life and conduct their networking through informal means (2000, p. 93). Looking at issues which pertain to community involvement in organisations, which is the most relevant aspect to this research into school governing, Putnam highlights several factors that were especially significant from his research. Those who were highly educated and with more financial and personal resources were more likely to volunteer and donate, and formal volunteering was more common in people with school-age children. Of all the factors examined, Putnam found that the most significant was existing involvement in community life. Those who are *schmoozers* and *machers* (Putnam's terms) are typically the same people who donate money and offer their time to community causes. So he argued that people who are actively involved in social networks are more likely both to volunteer and to persist in their voluntary contributions.

The causal factor that Putnam's identified to be the most significant was what he calls the *long civic generation* of those born between 1910 and 1940 – a cohort of men and women who have chosen to be engaged in civic affairs throughout their lives (Ibid., p. 110). All the signs from his research indicated that this generation were more likely to volunteer and engage in the community than those either before or after.

Societal security and tolerance depend on the harmony encouraged by those same community bonds. West in the ground-breaking work: *Distress in the City* underlined the significance of community interaction for societal cohesion. Examining both the rise of fundamentalism and the racist response, he underlines the need for dialogue, understanding and participation through democratic spaces for the flourishing of a stable and peaceful society (West, 2016). His suggestions for doing this are a return to civic engagement through adult education, community campaigns and local democratic initiatives all to inculcate a sense of recognition for the individual.

Putnam identifies some discrete areas of increased activity: small groups, social movements and internet activity. Social activity leads to involvement with others which in turn leads to increased understanding and empathy, through the build-up of social capital. Trust and shared goals enable close working together between strangers. The explanation of people joining in with group voluntary activity is ascribed in the majority of cases to choice, where individuals with social capital and an interest in the political sphere, select to get involved. Putnam shows that through the first two thirds of the 20th Century, involvement in a wide variety of civic groups abounded, but in the last third of that century, such ties waned. Putnam sought to discover why, to describe why it mattered and then to think what to do about this.

Enlightened self-interest, embodied in many religious codes and moral tales such as the fictional characters of *Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby* and *Mrs Donetoasyoudid* from Kingsley's (2012) *The Water-Babies*, originally written in 1893, taught a generalised reciprocity upon which our well-being and survival depend. These add up to a win-win situation where helping others is an insurance against ourselves being in need. Putnam stresses that, *Trustworthiness, not simply trust, is the key ingredient* (2000, p. 136). He makes a distinction between "thick" and "thin" trust, the former being that between people known to us and the latter with new acquaintances which extends beyond those known to us personally. Putnam's research indicated that those who have more social

trust are more likely to participate in politics and volunteer more and to find that, ... *honesty, civic engagement, and social trust are mutually reinforcing* (2000, p. 137).

Putnam's contention is that the long civic generation's demise means that the amount of social capital will decrease. The rise in internet involvement in groups has partly offset this decrease but in no way makes up for it. Baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964 exhibit less inclination to engage in their communities than their parents' generation did (Putnam, 2000, p. 275). In his summing up of the factors that contributed to the decline in civic engagement and social capital, Putnam's conclusion was that pressures of time and money were 10 percent of the total decline; suburbanisation contributed another 10 percent of the problem; the effect of electronic entertainment including the effect of TV, he ascribed to 25 percent of the decline, and he identified that the generational change - the replacement of the long civic generation by their less involved children and grandchildren - had been the most powerful factor. The effect is greater by age for more public forms of social engagement and less for private and small-scale socialising but this factor overall he thinks, could contribute 50 percent of the decline. The effect of the decline due to this last factor was not consistent across all activities but showed itself particularly in public forms of engagement, less for private schmoozing. Putnam speculates that the experience of living through World War II was a particularly important factor (2000, p. 283-284). A subsequent work by Putnam followed the progress of high school pupils to see how they fared in modern America (Putnam, 2015).

Sennett's (2013) examination of the waning of traditional bonds in the UK in *Together*, explores new ways of co-existing in communities. His starting point is the weakening of the cooperative spirit and his work is concerned with how it can be strengthened. This analysis of the macro situation is useful to contextualise the bigger picture in the UK, the country in which the research was conducted, and to further frame the lens through which it can usefully be viewed. Sennett's concern is how fragile cooperation can be maintained by citizens who first need to learn the complex skill of how to cooperate for good, through a dialogic relationship with others, where divergent views can be expressed and empathy developed. In this sense a governing body could be considered a forum within which negotiation and discourse can be conducted within a group who meet for that purpose. Sennett explores gift-giving, and describes altruism as either a pure gift in which nothing is expected in return or is given as the giver conducts a dialogue with his or her own shadow self which expects such behaviour.

e) Feminism

Feminist writers have been concerned with the disadvantaged role of women in society leading to a disenfranchisement from aspects of power and political representation which is a self-perpetuating syndrome. A strong feminist philosophy is present in my outlook and work. Three of the participants in my research were female, including myself, and the theme of role-stereotyping by others and female oppression were factors to consider.

Only one of my participants brought in overtly feminist issues to her narrative. She talked of the dissatisfaction she felt in her role bringing up children after a previously fulfilling career. Her decision to take on governorship was a method of filling the intellectual gap she had been experiencing. Her engagement with the role of governor and the time and effort she expended on it showed that governing was an ersatz career in itself which she worked on nearly full time. All her talents and work experience were brought to bear on the challenges of problem-solving for the school.

Richardson (1997) wrote: *Feminist political practice, moreover, is ideologically inseparable from personal practices* (1997, p. 55). My own family history is an important locator in my philosophical standpoint. Being brought up in a socialist household with a feminist mother, I listened in dismay as my mother reported joining Oxford University in 1937 when there were still very few female students. She eagerly attended her first lecture given by an aging professor who thought women should not be allowed in Oxford. When he saw a smattering of female students in the lecture hall, he turned his back in outrage and refused to give his lectures until they were removed. Once it became clear that they were staying put, he did have to deliver his lectures but never once looked directly at any of the women students and steadfastly ignored anything they tried to contribute for the whole year's lecture programme. Robinson (2009) told the social history of this long battle of attrition for academic acceptance by women students of which my mother's episode was but a part.

I read *The Female Eunuch* with delight and some amazement in the 1970s as a rallying call to change society (Greer, 1970). A student in the 1970s, I was influenced by the call by Millett (1970) for women to gather together for empowerment and accordingly I started a 'consciousness-raising' group when at college. There already was a Women's Group which met to discuss political issues and I was frustrated that it all seemed concerned with organisational issues and activity-based. I thought there was a need for a

discussion group to explore some of the more personal and theoretical issues of the day. The group I started met for some years and we covered set topics in an informal manner, choosing a title to talk about and around each week. Despite trying to encourage everyone there to join in as equals, I learned years later that two of the ten members always felt too intimidated to say much as they felt they were surrounded by so many articulate middle class women – so much for the space being conducive to women’s liberation.

A relevant theoretical thread lies with other critical theorists including feminist authors such as Richardson (1997) who have two areas of overlap with this research. The first is in the sense of the methodology being subjective, personally authored and derived. The method was chosen to reflect the research being sought, personal stories being generated through individual interviews in private settings. Such a method of enquiry foregrounds the private thoughts and recollections of individuals over more objective material about any quantities that could be measured and the open question format gives priority to the respondents own reflections rather than the prompts or directions of the interviewer. Speedy (2008) outlines how feminist researchers have:

Explored and made transparent the complex relations of power in research conversations between ‘the perceived’ and ‘the percivers’ when social and other locations differ (2008, p. 63).

She goes on to describe how feminists have tried to counter the idea of the ‘one-off’ research intervention, and to replace it with a more realistic view of a life as well as to make more transparent the relationships at play during research activity. Stanley (1992) made the link between auto/biography and biography to demonstrate the co-construction of research activities and following this same theme Merrill (2009) endorses the need to interrogate our own stances as emotional and anxious individuals as well as performing as researchers into the lives of others.

The second sense of using feminist theory is in that of learning about the private histories, family backgrounds and influences during the interviews with the participants. Authors such as Oakley (2005) have argued strongly for the inclusion of such domestic and mundane topics to be sought in research in order to explain the full picture of a life and its motivation and to more fully engage with the life story. In this way the act of in-depth qualitative interviewing is a feminist act where the participants are free to include those things that are personal and detailed as they see fit. It was noticeable in my

interviews that differences between women's experiences and that of men were beginning to appear, as one of the male respondents did not mention his home life or domestic circumstances at all as he told his story of being a governor. My professional work of careers counselling inevitably involves at least some discussion about other areas of life apart from the workplace. In doing so, the connection between work and non-work activities and emotions means that the person can present themselves as whole and rounded.

Feminist literature is a rich area for exploration and its relevance here was to inform and justify the study of the small intimate details of the personal narrative and women's experience in particular, as an entrée to understanding the bigger picture of community involvement. The struggle to foreground the domestic and personal has been long and closely fought over the last three decades. Steedman (1986) in *Landscape for a Good Woman* has this heartfelt plea:

And once the landscape is detailed and historicized in this way, the urgent need becomes to find a way of theorizing the result of such difference and particularity, not in order to find a description that can be universally applied but so that the people in exile, the inhabitants of the long streets, may start to use the autobiographical 'I' and tell the stories of their life (1986, p. 16).

Being a female academic researcher can raise issues of confidence and self-esteem, particularly when researching qualitative material with a methodology considered unusual. Fostering a community of researchers can make a huge difference in providing an understanding and supportive environment where critical discussions can take place in a protected or transitional space.

Thus the importance of the influence of feminism – firstly covering the experiences of women, and indeed those of men, in the domestic and personal sphere as well as that of work and volunteering. One way that these can be accessed is through the choice of an auto/biographical methodology. Secondly to give time to this aspect of a life, if it is significant in the narrative by participants, as a way of valuing and recognising people fully. Richardson (1997) sums this up:

I propose we write narratives, including the one about postmodernism, in which the previously subordinated are actors in the discourse, are speakers whose voices matter (1997, p. 59).

This centralising (or recognising in Honneth's terms) of our participants' voices applies in academic research, just as much as it does in careers counselling and in the forum of the governors' meeting.

f) Conclusion

Formenti and West (2018) wrote:

We have noted how interconnections can be woven between the personal, the interpersonal and the political, transcending a myopic individualism. And of the place of love and recognition in struggles to transform ourselves and society.
(2018, p. 213).

In this conclusion I weave together the many theoretical themes and concepts which underpin my theoretical positions. Commentary on the writing of others can be helpful in the abstract before consideration of the narratives and subsequently also acts to illuminate by being threaded through the individual narratives and the auto/biographical chapter. The literature review is multi-layered, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the roles being researched. This meant a struggle in the early stages of the thesis to adequately locate the place of theory in the work.

I was looking to generate some theory, some form of explanation, to build a thesis of motivation which could apply to school governorship as an example of community involvement. To do so, I wanted to access theoretical input that could encompass intimate, group and societal levels, including the historical, hence the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis. This work was informed by a feminist position where the study of the personal and the details of a life are seen as valid and necessary entrées to understand motivation.

Mills' (2000) writing allowed a historical framing of how to link the micro and the societal, the personal problems with society's issues. He introduced the micro, meso and macro levels of the individual, the organisation and the societal levels which added clarity to the ways which my participants described the factors influencing their motivation. My argument is that all three of these levels are significant in the complex picture of motivation.

At the micro or individual level, Winnicott's work on the development of the psychology of the child gives clarity in the way that early parent/child interactions enable an infant to learn the difference between the self and the other, which predicates

all subsequent relationships. The containment of separation anxiety and fear by 'good enough' parenting frees the developing child to enjoy relating to others and to have healthy, confident relationships in groups.

Goffman's work on role enactment is also useful to help us see all aspects of life as if they were different dramatic elements. In this way, the persona we adopt to be a governor volunteering our time is just one of the roles we inhabit alongside work, family, social life or leisure activities. Negotiating these different roles is complex and is often a largely unconscious activity which, when examined, can shed light on how we feel about these different roles we portray.

At the meso or medium level, the relevance is in the interaction between the individual and the organisation or group. Honneth's work on recognition as vital for human flourishing indicates what gives a person the inner confidence to put themselves forward for a governing vacancy. The need for recognition once on the governing body, or with any similar volunteering group can show why in inhospitable environments, people fail to find their place and do not feel respected. Without the act of being recognised to sustain them, motivation can be impossible to maintain. Those who are most valued receive not only respect from their peers but also the highest level of recognition from society. Two of my participants had received such honouring for their work and endeavours.

At the macro or societal level, Putnam's large-scale analysis of involvement in social activities in the US (and Sennett's corresponding work in the UK) is useful to establish a wider and longer view of the environment in which the individual is either motivated or not. This contextual analysis helps locate the volunteering in the current climate of the time, where more of society's roles are being carried out by unpaid or charitable organisations.

My argument therefore is that motivation to engage with the governing example of civic enterprise which helps civil solidarity has certain requirements. It needs an individual who is comfortable understanding the role to be played and a person with the ability to fully engage through their adequately strong sense of inner confidence. At the point of joining the governing body, there needs to be a reciprocal respect and recognition of what is to be offered and received by the individual and the group to create self-esteem. My participants' narratives showed that in toto when encouraged in this way to contribute fully, the highest level of respect can come from a societal or community

honour for that commitment. To sum up, the motivation to volunteer in a community is psychosocial; that is, a complex mix of individual and societal factors working together to generate commitment and involvement.

The Methodology Chapter follows which includes references to theoretical work that relates specifically to methodological issues. Referring to other authors' work continues in Chapters 4 – 6 of the individuals' narratives and the auto/biographical Chapter 7.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3: Methodology.

An unexamined life is not worth living (Socrates, c470 BC – 399 BC).

a) Introduction

To provide a clear structure for organising and editing material in this chapter I used the *Recommendations for Conducting and Writing Qualitative Research* suggested by Morrow (2005, p. 259). This provided a framework for the presentation of qualitative research. I identified with the research philosophy of Morrow, an educational psychologist, who described herself thus:

I am planted rather firmly in a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm ontologically with a powerfully critical feminist ideological axiology (Ibid., p.250).

Morrow's framework offered a way of displaying *more transcendent standards (those not associated with specific paradigms)* (Ibid.) which establishes a systematic reference frame for an in-depth, interdisciplinary and complex qualitative research of this type.

The chapter starts to explain the research in detail including the **underpinning philosophy** and the reasoning behind it. Auto/biographical narrative research was the type of approach used and this choice is fully explored. This involves a justification of the claims of the research findings to be taken seriously. The chapter continues with an explanation of the context in which the research was conducted and the research questions. This is followed by a description of the stages of the **research design**. The need and evidence for **researcher reflexivity** or *researcher-as-instrument* as Morrow terms it (Ibid.) is explained in the next section including the use of stimuli such as journals, photographs, drawings and collage, illustrated by examples, which were used as aids to reflexivity throughout the process. An outline of the **participants** and how they were selected follows, with details of the sample used, how many people were involved and how they were involved in the process.

Next the **data sources** are fully outlined and the crystallisation process that was followed is described. The process of **analysis** of the data forms the last part of this chapter and the route to analysing the material is delineated. The decision-making process about how to adequately represent the research in writing is outlined to explain the final format of this thesis. The results of the research appear in each of the four narrative Chapters 4 - 7 and they include fuller descriptions of the individuals involved

in the research. Areas for discussion arising from the research are covered in the penultimate Chapter 8.

b) Underpinning philosophy

Type of approach

My work originates from an essentially humanist, constructivist view of life. We exist with regard to each other and experience meaning through our actions, thoughts and relationships with other individuals. The symbolic interactionists of the Chicago School of the 1920s saw actions as a form of performance and language as the method through which we sign, express and communicate about our thoughts and our lives and those of others (Merrill and West, 2009).

Constructivism represents an epistemological position that holds that individuals know the world through directing themselves and that they make their own meaning from their experiences. It views the person as an open system, continually interacting with their environment, seeking equilibrium through ongoing change. There is no completion, or identifiable outcome, only a process (McMahon and Patton, 2006). An individual is therefore the sum of her experiences, personality, emotional development, dreams, genetics, fears, learning and reflections.

At the time of becoming a school governor, each of my participants had hopes from the role and aspects they wished to fulfil or wanted to satisfy. These may not have been things they wanted to gain, they could have been things that they wanted to contribute. I wanted to explore the range of these initial feelings and intentions and then see what ensued in terms of satisficers or disappointments. Such answers could provide insights for the future experience of governors. Understanding how a small group saw their experience would prove enlightening in terms of how to arrange the recruitment and induction of future incumbents to maximise their satisfaction and therefore their longevity and contribution in the role.

Qualitative research tends to be linked with the interpretivist paradigm of principles with a focus on the social context of reality and words as the unit of analysis. I subscribe to an interpretivist understanding, where we interpret others' movements, actions, meanings and motives from what people say; how they say it; what they don't say and how they behave and act. Instrumental to this approach is finding out the deeper meaning and significance of people's behaviour and experiences through deploying

research instruments such as unstructured or semi-structured interviews, audio recordings and transcripts, case studies, photographs etc. As most responses are verbal, a more in-depth explanation is achieved; however interpretation may prove challenging and is bound to be subjective.

I approached the research from a humanist perspective. At the most basic level we think, feel and experience and we exist. Science shows us the essential physical nature of humans as collections of physical material acting together with a mind. As far as truths are concerned, there can be many truths about one action or motivation depending on when it is appraised and who interprets it and this can change over time. This research asks questions in order to discover and uncover.

The life history is the narrative of one person's life, they tell their own story and evaluate it in their own terms (Bertaux and Delcroix, 2000). In terms of descriptors for my work, I eschewed the term ethnography as I had not lived with or accompanied my participants in their experiences of governing. I was a governor myself and my interest in the topic was a direct result of this, which I describe in the introduction Chapter 1, and analyse my own motivation in the auto/biographical Chapter 7. My participants told me their stories in narrative form which was how I chose to conduct my research. I approached governing as part of life interweaved with values and other roles. By using their narratives as discrete stories I could stay true to the material the interviews generated.

It [qualitative research] develops from aspects of anthropology and sociology and represents a broad view that to understand human affairs it is insufficient to rely on quantitative survey and statistics, and necessary instead to delve deep into the subjective qualities that govern behaviour (Holliday, 2007, p. 7).

I realised that there could be some motivational factors that I had not even considered myself. There were. For my research I thought that the answers from any one participant would be wide-ranging and multifaceted, possibly completely different from one person to the next and I wanted to be able to capture some of that complexity and explore the variations which would be linked to the person in question i.e. I needed room to describe the in-depth findings. Quantitative measures can capture manifold answers, particularly if respondents are given space to outline these with some element of more open written answers, but I wanted the chance to interrogate and probe any answer that I was given to ensure a greater understanding and subtlety in the material.

Asking for the prime motivation in a survey could have got an answer but I wanted to ask the follow-up questions about being a governor, *Why?* and *What happened next?* and *Where did that idea come from?* to gain an explanation in the words of the participant, probing in more depth to establish how far this motivation was met and satisfied. In a quantitative survey the questions would arise: which numbers to collate? What would it prove about motivation? The data collected would be only give answers at the simple level of agreement or headlines. I wanted to understand individual governors' perceptions of their world. I also knew my initial general questions would alter and become more focused as the research progressed.

Auto/biography

A unique aspect of the research is the auto/biographical element. This precise descriptor was used by Merrill and West to illustrate the necessary synthesis of analysis of the self alongside the analysis of the other. Their thinking was that no full understanding of life stories can be complete without clear thinking about the standpoint of the researcher, the storyteller and the nature and quality of the relationship between them. Taking meaning from the words of others requires an openness and an empathy for what such telling requires and readers need to be able to understand the standpoint of the researcher in order to be able to fully interpret the material provided. No-one is objective and so the subjectivities need to be laid as bare as possible. This research arose from a personal connection after over a decade of governing by the author. This identification with the subject under review has plusses and minuses. The familiarity with the terms, processes and issues meant that understanding and a connection were quick to develop between researcher and participants. On the minus side, it is easy to make assumptions about what is being discussed and the feelings behind the words.

I considered the boundary between ethnography and auto/biographical narrative research. Ethnography is often based in fieldwork with time spent with the research participants in the area of research (Denscombe, 1998). Atkinson's work detailing his accompanying of an opera company over a season of performances, or Ellis' partially fictionalised work about her teaching life with her students offers an insider's view through immersion in those respective cultures (Atkinson, 2006; Ellis, 2003). Ellis entitles her work an 'autoethnography', explicitly indicating the reflexivity and analysis of her own role and responses as an active integral member of the academic group being studied. I was a school governor with many years' experience in that role and I was

studying other governors, but I was not watching them carrying out their duties and I was not actively sharing the experiences that they had as governors through participating in their worlds, so my role was not ethnographic. In ethnographic research, the researcher immerses herself with the group in question, staying with them, seeking out their stories, experiencing what they do to more fully understand it and must pay very close and serious attention to their doings (Atkinson, 2006, p. xi).

My approach was also not phenomenological as I was not trying to experience what my participants had experienced. It was their narrative biographical thoughts and feelings that I was eliciting. Grounded theory starts with detailed observations and is often used when looking at practical situations where routine is a factor. Neither was the case with my research. I also rejected the label of ethnomethodology as this was concerned with the fine detail of interactions between group members, whereas I was interested in the individual's experience of the role of the school governor (Garfinkel, 1967). I was looking for a wider range of motivations and experiences which could be explored and teased out to reveal deeper emotions. After all, most governors do not explicitly discuss their motivation and I knew it would take some probing to elicit something that the participants themselves had perhaps never thought through. Narrative interviews seemed to be an approach that was highly relevant to the research topic as it called on the memory of the events as situated in the wider life story.

C. Wright Mills observed the interdisciplinary imperative to any biographical enquiry in order to get even close to chronicling the lives of others (2000). As my research progressed, I was increasingly aware of a wide range of relevant themes and factors which needed to be taken into account. Disciplinary boundaries have been left firmly behind in the quest for researching and studying learning lives. In order to research just one aspect of a life, we have, de facto, moved beyond interdisciplinarity, travelled through bricolage, and created a new and emerging biographical discipline of our own. We are in a new era of research about learning lives where the previous disciplinary boundaries are no longer helpful. C. Wright Mills (Ibid.) pointed the way that the enquiries needed to be framed broadly and deeply by considering many different disciplines.

In order to understand the way lives are lived, how learning takes place within those lives and the way that people experience their own state, we need the full arsenal of analytical tools at our disposal. The point of sticking within one academic boundary

would only be appropriate if our observations fell clearly within the boundaries of that discipline. The learning lives we are researching reach so far across these disciplines that we have moved beyond their confines. From the individual's thoughts and feelings we gain insights from psychology and psychoanalysis; from their situation and groupings sociology informs us; from their backgrounds and the institutions within which they are operating we call on history and political analysis, and to enter their imaginative worlds we can use literary and fictional methods. In creating this background for our bricolage, we are using whatever comes to hand for our enlightenment.

Kincheloe offers this definition of interdisciplinarity,

A fuzzy concept at best, interdisciplinarity generally refers to a process where disciplinary boundaries are crossed and the analytical frames of more than one discipline are employed by the researcher (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 685).

In his development of the concept of bricolage and its application in social research, he tells us, *Such interdisciplinarity demands a new level of research self-consciousness and awareness of the numerous contexts in which any researcher is operating* (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 324). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe bricolage as a meshing of techniques according to what is useful to use at the time, like forming a quilt, including creative methods of inquiry and all varieties of collecting material in order to respond to the demands of the task at hand. We have truly moved beyond explaining the need, and almost asking permission, to stand astride more than one discipline. Our work of necessity is creating a new discipline which draws on all of these and is itself something new. We find ourselves in a place where no discipline binds us and all disciplines are open to us.

Context

My research is an exploration of the motivation of school governors as an example of community engagement. As a governor myself my interest arose about the way that people see such a voluntary position in their own lives and how this might differ to the meaning it had for me. To undertake in-depth interviewing with my participants I had to be able to locate my work in terms of conceptual approaches to methodology and relevant literature around the chosen methodology was consulted. This related to the type and style of interviewing, the interview experience itself, the justification for the

overall approach and the rationale for the transcription, analysis and presentation of the interviews. I found a way to situate and relate the narratives within the frame of auto/biographical interviews: a method which suited my skills and expertise and the nature of the subject-matter being discussed. All these aspects of the research required reportage, explanation and justification and they are described here.

The excitement of returning to studying after twenty years arose from seeing how things had changed. I saw and heard about new ideas for research that involved interviewing friends and others known to the researcher; work which drew in aspects of art, music or literature using the background and interests of the researcher as direct imports to illustrate or enrich the research (Hoult, 2014); work which made fictional representations of data to draw wider lessons from the results (Clough, 2002), and work using slang and humour (Stanley, 1992). All of these more creative approaches were taken seriously, argued over and used in research projects which had credence. Forster's refrain of: "Only connect!" (Forster, 1910, p. 188) suggested wider approaches could be used to more fully explore significant influences, including literature and creativity to bring their influence to bear upon my work. In this sense, this work was not solely about just one of my selves, the academic researcher self - but the whole of me. It drew on my experience of the world and brought a panoply of my lenses to the frame. At the same time it also only represented a selection of my thoughts and experiences, deliberated over and chosen to raise certain issues, edited and revised to make my points.

Approaching the task of interviewing the research participants at the start, I read more about the kind of research activity to which my instincts and experience took me. Once I had decided to use in-depth qualitative interviews, Merrill and West's *Using Biographical Methods* (2009) was very instructive in terms of guidance about a rigorous approach to a subject that can be seen as overly subjective and woolly. Andrews talks about the beginning of the research process coming from deep within (Andrews, 2007, p. 27). A choice of subject to research is always accessed through our own concerns, experience and curiosity; we are all in that sense researching ourselves. I wanted my research to be an area slightly removed from my normal job which was as a careers counsellor. My choice of subject was designed to enable me to study an area that I would not be too close to, so that I would be able to come to it with a fresh mind, assess it more critically and maintain my interest throughout my doctoral studies. Accordingly, I chose an area that was not directly concerned with the usual activities of my day job as a self-employed careers adviser. An allied area of direct interest and regular

involvement was my voluntary work as a school governor. This was still related to the wider world of work if that meant career as a whole, encompassing any endeavour related to progress through life and not solely paid employment (Corfield, 1995). I have been a governor of four different state schools over the last 20 years and when the research commenced was Chair of the governors at a state junior school (7 to 11 year-old pupils). I went on to be Chair of the governors of a primary school which was run through a Multi-Academy Trust which also ran the afore-mentioned junior school.

Unlike some doctoral students, as a self-funding student, I had a relatively free choice of topic and methodology with few restrictions on the kind of research to undertake. On exploring existing research into governors, I found that there was some material on how far governing bodies as a whole contribute to school success but there was a scarcity of material on the nature of the individual engagement of governors and particularly the development of their motivation over time. It thus appeared that this could be a fruitful area for study. Talking informally to people about being a governor, I had previously often been met by the reaction : *Oh, parents put themselves forward as governors to give their child advantages in the school, don't they?* I was horrified by this perception. Was this cynical view true I wondered? It had never felt that way to me, but I did not have any research to offer any evidence about the motivation of school governors.

When I had children at the school where I was a governor, I was scrupulous about never getting involved in things directly related to my children and indeed, I found the fact that I was a current parent whilst being a governor to be an embarrassment. This feeling was fuelled one day when, as a governor, I had been asked to judge the entries in a school competition and I overheard two parents cynically assuming that a judge's child would be the victor in the competition. I was dismayed at their attitude and judged my child's entry extra harshly to emphatically avoid that eventuality.

Other people expressed incredulity that I could do all this serious, regular voluntary work for no remuneration. Indeed at tough times on the governing body when conflict was all around, I would occasionally ask myself the same question: *Why on earth am I putting myself through all this?* As an impecunious, time-poor, single parent with various health issues, there would certainly have been many easier ways of passing the time. I met plenty of ex-governors who had lost their interest and motivation, had become disillusioned or exhausted and had resigned. On its own, talking to ex-governors who had resigned could also be an interesting topic for research, examining why and how their motivation broke down and disappeared, but I decided for the

practical reason of limiting the scope of the research, to invite participation with existing governors, those currently active, like me, so that I could compare and contrast what emerged. This decision affected the research of course, all my participants were continuing governors at the time of the research so were initially positive about their involvement in governing.

Merrill and West talk of the organic nature of the process unfolding as the research progresses and as the threads themselves indicate a path to be followed (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 136). There may be a natural evolution in this kind of research and if I were to start my research again now I would understand that at each stage of the research, none of it may make any real sense in terms of conclusions and findings until one actually starts writing it all down as a coherent whole much later on in the process. It was only at a late stage of my research at an international academic conference (Erasmus Intensive Programme, Amadolu University, Turkey in June 2013) that I was recommended an American text by Putnam which enabled me to locate my research more completely in the field of applied civics, by discussing the history of civic engagement in the round (Putnam, 2000). This was a helpful way of positioning my research more in the macro scale of societal issues and was what I had been looking for.

Research questions

At this point I refined my research questions which were:

1. What is the experience of a small sample of governors (including myself) with regard to governorship?
2. Which factors emerge as important in their motivation to become and remain governors?
3. How can these experiences be theorised drawing on literature from psychology, sociology and community engagement literature?

After the research interviews had been conducted and stimulated by further reflection and reading, I added a fourth question:

4. What does the research into school governance reveal about social solidarity through community interaction?

Authentic exploratory academic research of this type is a process of discovery and as such is different to writing on a topic where the conclusion may be known in advance. It

also means that it is difficult to make clear notes about the literature when it is not known which the pertinent parts are of what is being read until subsequently. This was an iterative process. I had to consult many books again nearing the end of my thesis to establish which references I wanted to make, whilst reviewing and updating my research questions. The main alteration was to situate the research as an example of community engagement.

Additionally, in a field of current interest and topicality such as school governorship, it was necessary to just stop at some stage and commit to writing about the context up to a fixed point which would inevitably be out of date when the work was submitted. Government pronouncements on governing bodies arise regularly, but my research had to stop somewhere. This is the difference of looking at issues in contemporary social fields where current issues are rapidly changing, rather than, say, a historical topic, where it is likely that there is a given state of knowledge of a more static nature at any one time.

c) Research design

I used auto/biographical narrative interviews as my research method. I interviewed three school governors, and after a year, interviewed them again. This added a longitudinal element to the work, to see if their motivation had changed over that time and if so, in what way and why. My choice of interviews as method was to collect rich data on a small group of individuals, *thick description* in Geertz' term, rather than less data from a larger sample (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). Asking very open questions on the overall theme of their governorship, their responses inevitably covered other areas of their lives. These included self-image, identity, power, family and class, race and gender issues. I wanted to delve into the subject to fully understand as much as possible about the way my participants saw their motivation which would be limited if conducted through questionnaires or surveys. I also chose to use individual interviews rather than group discussions so that each participant could tell me their own story, which could be quite a personal narrative, best told privately. Merrill and West write that biography invites us to see both the patterns and similarities in others' lives as well as the uniqueness (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 2). In terms of the relationship between the individual and the role of governing that they were inhabiting, such in-depth research allowed judgements to be formed about the exact way an individual relates to others and the complex web of interactions that take place on the governing body. This is key to understanding the nature of human perceptions of engagement and distance, progress

and limitations, and success and failure in this specific instance of community involvement.

Ethical considerations

Before the research started I obtained ethical clearance from the university Ethics Committee. This is an important stage of any social research. I had underestimated the complexity of privacy and issues around protecting my participants until I applied for this clearance. Initially I had thought that because governorship in itself is not deeply personal, there would be a limited need for ethical concerns. In their interviews the subject matter strayed far away from pure governance stories and moved into personal narratives about upbringing, relationships, working life, discussion of other members of the governing body and the local authority, personal development and discussions about family members and their health and progress, all or any of which could be awkward at best and at worst, positively damaging, if it was identifiable. The ethical consent form used is included in Appendix II.

I was aware of these issues throughout the research, the transcribing and the analysis of the interviews. Consequently the scripts had to be anonymised and this needed to be thorough as it would be relatively easy for readers to identify the people and the schools concerned given the lengthy and detailed excerpts included. There was a duty of confidentiality to my participants who talked to me very openly and who trusted me to use their stories circumspectly. However, this could never be completely guaranteed as with such a small sample, identifying characteristics of the people, places and actions are always likely to be present for a determined sleuth. Complete disguise would necessitate such substantial changes that the narratives would have to be completely rewritten, creating almost fictional material. Such a task required a balancing between anonymity and keeping an interesting and full narrative. In Kay's interviews, due to personal identifying characteristics of both the school and her son, this was particularly challenging. Her motivation involved her son and his progress so he was central to her transcripts and I had to alter some details about the case to ensure their anonymity.

There are two possible levels of anonymity, the first is that of retaining confidentiality to the outside reader to disguise the location and details of the participants in the research so that they cannot be identified. The second level would be when the participants themselves were unable to identify where their material was being used in the text. Throughout the text I used different names for the participants, for the schools

and for any other individuals and places mentioned. This level of disguise though was only for any reader of the thesis, as each participant would be easily able to identify themselves through the details given and this seemed to be unavoidable with such detailed narratives being depicted and so few participants. The consequence of this was that any comments about and analysis of the participants would be quite transparent to them. The implication of this is that ideas might need to be moderated and softened to be acceptable which could alter the findings of the research. The issue of anonymity and confidentiality is highly complex and needed more consideration. As the research progressed, so many different and difficult ethical issues emerged that I felt I needed to reflect on these separately. Chapter 8 considers these issues in more depth.

d) Researcher reflexivity

I had previously been trained in counselling skills and active, empathetic listening and had the skills to encourage people to open up to me and tell me their stories. Often clients, once they have started, want to keep on talking because as adults the experience of being seriously listened to is rare and they find the experience cathartic. When we talk to other people, it is normally in form of a dialogue rather than the very different and indulgent experience, of not just being allowed to talk, but of having a listener who is actively engaged and interested and also not judgemental about what is being heard. In my paid work the interview was an intimate space for my clients, not unlike a confessional, a safe space in which to hear and evaluate their own progress. As I heard their stories and reflected back their achievements and experiences, I was recognising my clients. Honneth describes this need for recognition as a basic requirement for human fulfilment (2007, p. xi).

Qualitative research can be used as an indicator of recurring themes and influences, as in *The Ethnographic I*, where Ellis uses an ethnographic approach coupled with storytelling to understand and illuminate the behaviours of a group of her students (Ellis, 2003). Holliday suggests that researchers could create fictional accounts of the events they know to be there in order to uncover underlying issues and provoke fresh points of enquiry (Holliday, 2007, p. 111). The essential point is that educational researchers should assemble, within their research craft, an honesty of thought and integrity of language with which to express the moral positions (as well as the methodological justifications) of their enquiry. This must inevitably call for new ways of seeing as outlined by Mills (Mills, 2000, p. 143).

My role in co-constructing and influencing the narratives through my relationships with the participants and my conduct in the interview, my choice of subject, my manner and facial expressions, let alone my handling of the analysis in terms of attitude, orientation, skills and intellectual rigour were all significant and that is why an analysis of my own motivation was a key element of this research. It is a work of auto/biographical narrative research in that understanding the research into others' lives necessitates first interrogating my own.

Oakley's (2005) early writing was pivotal in generating understanding and acceptance of the importance of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Similarly, literature about the survivors of the holocaust, both historical and historiographic offer deep discussions around personal testimony and memory construction which are very relevant to auto/biographical research but could only be lightly touched on in this thesis. There are many methodological areas that are ripe for further study in this vein. The study of narrative life history throws up many ethical issues in addition. It forces examination of truth and validity, and of to whom the life story belongs, which are more fully discussed later in this chapter.

The auto/biographical element of this research, presented in Chapter 7, is important to this type of biographical research. I am a school governor and the original idea came from thinking about my own role and how it might compare and contrast with that of others. To do this I needed to interrogate my own motivation and spend time reflecting on my experiences and thus provide a reflexive context for the research from the start. I also needed to do that to think about my own position as researcher and co-contributor to each interview as unconscious processes are at work in the research relationship on both sides. In my narrative chapters of each participant I attempt to understand those unconscious processes which could be affecting them, in my auto/biographical chapter I try to unearth my own. Plummer reminds us that:

We need to look at how the researcher's personal and social worlds lead to these constructions, and how such constructions are subsequently used in the social world. This is not to deny that there may be some independent truth content in such research; it is merely to recognise that issues of personal experience, social morality and public politics are an ever-present feature of research and need to be firmly confronted (Plummer, 2001, p. 206).

A key element of looking at the material was through regular supervisions with my academic supervisors. They came at the material fresh and often contributed firmer reactions and suggestions of more psychological dimensions than I had perceived. I have had to keep considering the gestalt. Being present in the interviews and being aware of the person behind the participant in some cases affected my interpretation and gave me a more holistic understanding of what was said. But this was not just a glib assumption. I interrogated the material, my memories and contemporaneous notes, my journal reflections and understanding of the role. Certain aspects of the discussions resonated with other aspects of the interaction, as they were repeated or seemed significant. Critical consideration of the analysis continued throughout and I felt considerable responsibility for representing the lived lives of my participants fairly and justifiably overall. Conscientious reflection about the conclusion being drawn is important as a way of respecting the participants. West shares his concerns about the responsibility of drawing these conclusions,

And some of the ideas might concern, dismay or even alienate particular people. It is one thing to engage in conversation and exchange ideas; another to observe, in cold print, intimate biographical details interpreted by someone else, however empathetically. Individuals may resent their story being narrated in the ways I have chosen (West, 1996, p. 213).

I had to proceed from the basis of being an experienced academic; a best-selling author; a counsellor with twenty years' experience in the business world; a qualified manager; a senior lecturer who marked and evaluated the qualitative studies of others; a PhD researcher with an experienced and specialist team of supervisors; a doctoral student at an institution with an impressive niche focus on auto/biographical life research and a student experiencing a twenty-year methodological surge in narrative studies. These biographical facts give me the audacity to present this research and also to keep interrogating the stories shared with me by my participants.

Hitherto unseen, hidden or ignored aspects of research that involve the embodiment of feelings are important and can help us understand the nature of the interaction and indeed, the fuller story of the life being explored. In considering the physical aspects of a particular research activity, I related certain aspects of my interviews and my reflexive work to wider issues related to research relationships, the body and the environment and considered how my material connected with these headings. I also thought about how

we connect specifics with more general issues and to what extent they are interlinked. I drew on the ideas from dramaturgy to illuminate these aspects. Having more of an awareness of the totality of the interview experience enabled me to see any emerging issues more fully. This was an attempt to garner more of Mills' *encyclopaedic sense* by exploring issues through more than one perspective (Mills, 2000, p. 142).

Research journals

I represented my reflections on my recorded interviews in a research journal as well as thoughts about other unrecorded interviews and discussions which were all part of my background research. I wrote a research journal regularly from the time of the original idea of doing the research. This built on an existing occasional reflective journal, a notebook with lined and blank pages for handwritten notes, used when I got the urge to think through and record my ideas, opinions, issues, blocks and reflections. This was often the place where I wrote in an uncensored and unstructured way, recording in a stream of consciousness that which occurred to me. It was used as a diary, as a confessional, as a writing prompt, as a best friend, a creativity aid and as an ideas repository. Mills underlines the essential nature of keeping such a file or journal,

Many creative writers keep journals, the sociologist's need for systematic reflection demands it . . . to keep your inner world awake (1959, p. 196).

As the part-time PhD progressed, the thesis was referenced more frequently in my journal until appearing in some guise almost every entry. Once expressed, it was done, in the sense that it was recorded, noted and specified. Appendix I shows three examples of pages from the journal. Goldberg talks of the cathartic nature of this kind of writing,

The ability to put something down . . . that moment you can finally align how you feel inside with the words you write; at that moment you are free because you are not fighting those things inside. You have accepted them, become one with them (Goldberg, 1986, p. 32).

My journals were always going to be useful as a record of my research reflections. I called them journals rather than diaries as they include tickets, photos, drawings or doodles to illustrate my comments about relevant events or people. This kind of journal entry, contemporaneous with the research, allows assumptions under scrutiny to be spelled out and interpretations to be posited and worked out. Such writing encourages the researcher to compose and interrogate their personal narrative about their own role

and the significance of their active participation in the research. Hunt describes the need for free-writing and other creative outlets to stimulate the workings of the unconscious mind (Hunt and Sampson, 2006, p. 64).

Collage and other creative prompts

Startled and then inspired by Clough's fictional representation of his educational research, I wondered if I could play with my interview material to be more creative and to reach new insights (Clough, 2002). I started to depict one of my interviews as if it was a story told by a third party observing the scene. This encouraged and allowed making the familiar strange and necessitated explaining the internal thoughts and emotions that I was experiencing. The use of a third person narrator allowed a creative projection into the mind of my collaborator, which was justified in the need to tell the story and describe the action taking place. The resulting short scene appears at the start of Kay's narrative in Chapter 4. I subsequently showed this piece of writing to Kay and she was amused to read it and agreed it was an interesting way of re-considering the circumstances of the interaction and of 'seeing' some of the underlying emotions at play. Ultimately the significance of it was for me in terms of the analysis of the scene, to more fully scrutinise the significance of the fact that we were close friends before the interviews which was bound to have been an element at play.

In this sense I was using a more dialogical approach, involving my participants in the analysis, used by Skeggs as discussed in Merrill and West (2009, p. 141). I also used this technique in the interviews itself by sharing my initial conclusions: *You mention challenge a lot, is this an important theme for you as a governor?* making explicit my emerging thoughts and trying them out on my participants. Often used in counselling, termed reflecting, I used their own words back to them and this allowed the other person to agree, counter or temper the original idea, to more closely align my impressions with their own perceptions, and for them to 'own' them as being closer to their own reflections (Egan, 1980).

As I grew in confidence as an academic writer I saw the benefits of varying the ways of writing up the research. One interview had a back story of connections and prior meetings. Rather than just list these, I experimented with the use of a prologue, a literary device for just such a purpose. Not exactly fiction but not just reportage either, this prologue added a sense of history and connectivity to my research participant by presenting it in a more dramatic form. In my auto/biographical chapter I used an

introduction which was presented as a first-person reflection or inner thought process. This was to help to 'see' myself in role as a governor and to illuminate my mixed feelings about it.

It felt important to include myself as an example of being a school governor, in the form of a reflexive narrative. However, I had several false starts at generating this chapter finding it hard to access a clear view about my own background that went below the practised family stories. Speedy (2008) provided some suggestions for,

. . . generating liminal spaces or thresholds to other ways of seeing, acting, working and or meaning-making and that actually make a difference to the lives people live (2008, p. 31).

Speedy was interested in the spaces around personal accounts, the use of imagination to fill in the *gaps and cracks* that exist between stories as a way of exploring some of the untold narratives and multiple meanings that can be discovered, citing poetry and performance spaces as examples (2008, p. 32). Accordingly I used such a technique by writing a third party scene around the interview with Kay which appears in the narrative in Chapter 4.

Analysing my own motivation for the auto/biographical content was a different matter in terms of generating material, as it proved difficult. I found that having prompts to think about my development were helpful. I looked at a favourite quirky photograph from my childhood to see myself as a youngster. Figure 1 shows the unposed shot of me as a curious 8-year-old, sauntering off on my own apart from the family group, looking down at a shadowy flight of steps. I am pictured literally on the edge of a deep darkness, peering in. This could be seen to represent being on the brink of the unknown difficulties and dangers to come in life. This sums up my state of innocence at that time: one who, up to that point, had been shielded from anything too unpleasant by a happy family life, and one who was also looking to test the boundaries of curiosity to find and try out new experiences.



Figure 1. An inquisitive child.

Looking at this photograph worked as a stimulus to think about the younger me, aiding me to remember how life seemed back then, which in turn helped to see how things had changed and pinpointed what the effects of those changes had been. I seem to have been full of curiosity about life and keen to explore.

At my 46th birthday over a decade earlier in 2008, whilst staying with some cousins, as a surprise loving gift, I had been presented with a set of five Russian Dolls. Each doll had been painted by one of my cousin, her husband and their son, plus my two children, showing different phases of my life story as seen by the group – each had taken a different element of my life with which to decorate one of the five dolls. I found the set

of dolls a hilarious and touching surprise gift at the time, and it was helpful to look back at them as part of my thinking about my own auto/biography. I was informed that they depicted (shown from right to left in Figure 2), me as a baby; being a gregarious teenager; being married to an Arsenal fan(!); being a mother, through to how I was dressed on the day of the secret painting. Their choice of the perceived phases of my life were interesting and amusing and quite different to my own perceptions, informed as they were by their own recollections and interests.



Figure 2. Russian dolls.

Family artefacts such as a series of affectionate humorous caricatures drawn by my father each year helped as a way of seeing myself through my parents' eyes. One such is illustrated in Figure 5 showing me aged four, dressing up as a princess with my family around me depicted bowing low in salute to my regal authority. I was keen to assume different roles from a young age apparently.

At a doctoral research summer school in 2013, I participated in a workshop on different ways to access auto/biography. This particular session involved creating a collage, to initiate considering representing the self through art. The term collage comes from the French verb *coller* meaning 'to stick' and refers to finding materials to cut and stick on to a flat surface (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Sitting in a hot university classroom in the middle of Turkey with three colleagues, I was immersed in cutting and tearing out scraps of pictures from magazines. The task

was to stick them together on a paper to create a picture entitled: "*I am . . .*". I enjoyed myself constructing and creating the collage because making an image was satisfying and had personal meaning for me. I had started out looking for figurative pictures to represent my interests, a piano to show my learning of this instrument, a city garden to show my hobby etc. As most of the magazines I had access to were travel guides, I soon realised that finding a picture of a piano, or anything musical, was hopeless. Instead I changed tack and just focused on finding different colours that attracted me. They were bold and very varied. Stuck together in an abstract overlaid amalgam, they comprised a vivid, messy show. Different to using words, this was the language of abstract image and thus needed to be explained to colleagues before anyone could understand what my meaning in it was, beyond guessing at the purpose of my choosing certain colours and shapes. It was not figurative or in any way realistic, merely impressionistic, a jumbled mass of bright, appealing (to me), colours overlaid and intertwined. We were instructed to write a title for the collage which built on the sentence beginning: "*I am ...*". I wrote: "*I am ... colourful*" as my title. I was deeply happy with my collage, I had enjoyed creating it and felt it was a good representation in abstract form of my varied interests, optimistic outlook and humanistic persuasion. This collage is framed on my study wall and appears in the frontispiece to this thesis.

Following my interest in this form of exploring feelings around identity, I read Gauntlett (2007) who talks of learning through work of this kind, ...*the idea of self-exploration through making pictures*. Creative methods are often employed in therapeutic work with people exploring their sense of self in order to encourage deeper and more reflective responses (Ibid.). Gauntlett and Butler-Kisber (2010) were both useful for laying out the role of creative activity as part of auto/biographical understanding.

e) Participants

Numbers

I took advice from more experienced qualitative researchers about how many people to interview. I was advised that I would get so much material if I interviewed more than a handful of people that my analysis would be impossible to report on in any meaningful way. Denscome (1998) describes the classic tests of research as being for truthfulness and applicability, reliability and validity, that is: is the data factual, relevant, can the research be repeated and would any other researcher looking at the results get the same

findings. There is an extensive debate about the validity of small numbers of respondents in in-depth qualitative research. The question is how useful can the views of one person or a small sample be in establishing the motivation for behaviour? Such a small sample only gives information about the behaviour of the people in that sample and cannot be generalisable to the whole population. This question links to a positivist search for proofs, facts and truth. A review paper: *How many interviews is enough?* by the National Centre for Research Methods debated this issue, coming up with the overall conclusion that the context and questions being asked determine the numbers. They argued that there is therefore no absolute measurement of what the term “enough” might be (Baker and Edwards, 2014).

Whether the reliability of the method would allow repetition for the same outcome is a moot point. My personal breakthrough to resolve this issue, was thinking of Anne Frank’s diary as a trusted historical record. This 13-year old’s private diary about her actions, thoughts and feelings gave us an insight into the situation, preoccupations and living arrangements of a single fugitive teenager and her family in Nazi-occupied Holland during the Second World War. Her work is now widely known throughout the western world and is taught in schools (Frank, 1997). Frank’s views are not needed to be typical or representative, they stand as personal, subjective, partial and, in this case, domestic in the extreme and yet we willingly read much from and into them. From this single source we generalise about the life of times of many on the basis that the life experiences of one person are representative of those of others in similar positions. This does not mean that Frank’s views are absolutely true of others, just that the events in her refuge and her emotional life have elements to offer us which help us understand more about the difficult and dangerous situation of those oppressed by the Nazis.

Indeed primary sources of historical data have often been written by interested individuals e.g. monks or courtiers, who are in some way paid or sponsored to write their records and the results are in that sense, partial accounts and not neutral. They are commissioned by the powers-that-be such as monarchs, religious leaders or nobility. The longer ago they originate, the less likely there are to be many contemporary corroboratory sources. The Bayeux Tapestry is a case in point, believed to be commissioned by the Norman Bishop Odo under William the Conqueror in the 1070s to show the Norman’s victory over the English forces and stitched by an English religious community. Up until today the tapestry is used as a single source to illustrate the period and although its accuracy is debated, its depictions are used to illuminate the key events

portrayed. Biographies on the other hand are one author's view of a life. They are considered to exemplify transferable ideas, emotions and to illustrate the way a life is lived.

I interviewed four people and also used myself to provide a fifth narrative. The interviewees were not chosen to be particularly representative although by chance they ended up being two women and two men, one of whom (Kay) was very well-known to me. Kay had been a friend for many years and had volunteered to be an interviewee to be helpful for me. An associate from my governing work also offered to take part in the research (Stephen). At the point of writing up my research, later in the process, I took the decision to not use the interview from Stephen. His experiences were very interesting and would have provided a wealth of material but his story turned out to be similar in many respects to that of another participant and I was keen to show as wide a variety of governing experiences as possible.

My next two interviewees were referred by my local authority governors' clerking service when I contacted the latter for suggestions. One (Thomas) I had met twice briefly before although I only realised that he was an acquaintance of mine once I met him for our first interview, and the other, Alison, was unknown to me, a stranger. Both Thomas and Alison were long-serving governors. I hesitate to ascribe class labels as this should be self-ascribed but the participants were middle-class if given a label according to their job or previous jobs which, in all cases, were professional or technical.

One participant, Kay, was a parent governor, that is, elected from the parent body. The other two had started as parent governors but had since become community governors. Community governors are a category either selected from the local community or nominated by local authorities or other agencies as people interested in becoming a governor, and without any necessary direct link to the school. Parent governors' interests would seem to be more specific to their connection with the school because of their particular child being a pupil. Although I was a community governor I was a current parent of a child at the school too. This had not prompted me to stand as a governor except that it was practical to be a governor at my local school and more obvious for me once elected, to agree to take the Chair as I was going to be around whilst my child was still at the school. I wanted to include participants who were neither staff nor current parents, in order to explore their motivation where they did not have a direct and current tie to any educational institution.

By chance I had two white women, one white man and one man who was of Afro-Caribbean descent (Thomas). All of my participants were governors at state schools. The eventual mix seemed to be good enough given that each person would be contributing their own individual story. I did not seek to interview any governors from fee-paying private schools as this was not my prime area of interest and might have been more problematic in terms of making comparisons.

Spectrum of Familiarity

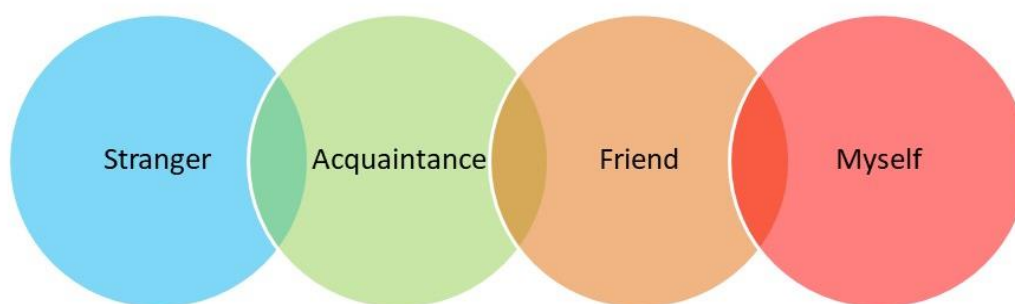


Figure 3.

The spectrum of familiarity in Figure 3 illustrates my relationship to the different participants, with Alison, a stranger, at the far left, moving through Thomas, an acquaintance, to Kay a close friend of mine; the relationships get progressively stronger and more intimate moving along the spectrum from left to right.

Friends as participants

In Figure 3 I illustrated the different degrees of relationship between myself and my participants. The issues around interviewing people known to you or even close friends are complex. On the one hand this can lead to a shortcut of expression, an immediate interest in the subject, a trust, an intimacy leading to deeper revelations and a pleasing familiarity of association; after all, we like to spend time with our friends. It can also lead to a confidence in the reception one gets, the hearing of the life story and in the process. On the other hand it may be just retracing old steps in a familiar pattern of call and response, where the status quo of the existing relationship governs what transpires

in the research encounter. This could mean that there is a lack of open exchange through one participant or both, living up, or down, to expectations, with already-known material being recycled rather than any new insights being shared. It is easy not to hear what those close to us are saying when we assume we know them well, in the same way that we do not really look at or see them.

Many researchers use opportunistic research situations when they conduct research, whether with regard to the subject areas of the enquiry, the arenas in which research is based, or with the participants themselves. It could be for very good reasons; the people and places are known to us; they can easily become available; they are straightforward to access; familiar people will be sympathetic to and interested in our research; if we work with them, they may already be involved in the activity concerned as our colleagues, familiars or clients; they may even have volunteered to take part. Such prior relationships produce familiarity, or even intimacy, which can oil the wheels of the interchange and by doing so, can enrich a research encounter. Revelations can blossom when closeness and trust are abundant. Taking a contrary view, they could also be lazy, contrived, untruthful and self-limiting. Although most people will acknowledge the opportunistic aspects of their research topics and contacts, it is often only a brief explanatory mention, merely describing the nature of these relationships as though that is all that needs to be considered.

The ways that such previous relationships may affect our research is often not made explicit in the methodology. Knowledge of those with whom we are researching, before, beside and beyond our research activities, can be significant. Familiarity can, of course, bring ease of communication by travelling along known tracks; friendship could facilitate an extra depth and honesty to conversation and fellowship may provide a relaxed precursor to shared experience and the discovery of meaning. Alternatively, issues of objectivity and distance; power relations (overt or latent) between interviewer and interviewee; secrecy and lies; congruence and comfort, could all come in to play, thus affecting and perhaps distorting our understanding and interpretation.

What we know of our topics, our participants and our themes needs to be taken into account, analysed and assessed, otherwise there is a danger of our taking short-cuts and making assumptions that could have a big impact on our research material and our analysis. I am arguing for a deeper more reflexive approach to the tacit - containing

those unspoken elements or circumstances which surround the research encounter - in order to more thoroughly assess their effect on the research relationship.

The issue of being friends with, or having a prior relationship with the participants was significant. Opportunistic sampling is fairly common in qualitative research as issues of importance can be identified from those around us and we often are involved in some way in the field in which we are researching (Holliday, 2007). A close association can also develop as a result of going through the research process itself with the in-depth interviews producing an intimacy that evolves into friendship as life-worlds are shared and values explored (Andrews, 2007; West, 2001).

Participants' involvement

At the start of the research the only commitment I gave to my participants was to interview them about their experience of being a school governor for my doctoral studies. Once we met, I asked to meet them for a second interview a year later in order to see what developments there had been in their motivation. I did not specify how the research would be created or presented, indeed, this only took shape after the interviews had taken place. They were all happy to share their information on the basis that I could then use it how I wished, albeit keeping their identities anonymous if I used their material.

I was pleased that bumping into her locally after her first interview, one collaborator talked to me about issues that she wanted to discuss the next time as a result of events that had taken place since she was interviewed initially. This signaled to me that she felt involved in the process and could see some merit in having a space in which she could think the issues through for herself whilst answering my questions. I had been acutely aware of using my participants for my research purposes, this showed that in addition to the aims of the research, there was also a useful place in which they could reflect.

One of the other participants explicitly stated that she saw the interviews as being helpful personally, to think through her own position and 'see' it more clearly. Another said that he was pleased to be able to use the time to reflect on his recent taking on of the position of Chair of the governors. Two participants were very interested in reading the transcripts after each interview to aid this reflective process. This drew parallels with my own careers counselling practice where clients find the process of thinking, reflecting, talking, being heard and recognised, very helpful. Some writers have raised

the issue of research interviews as therapy (Etherington, 2004). Being interviewed can be very useful for clients but also has dangers, as the point of research is the material gathered in the interview itself and the process does not necessarily go anywhere that can be helpful for resolving clients' own issues.

f) Data sources

Setting

Holliday stresses the significance of the setting in which qualitative research occurs:

Another very important task lies in establishing the research setting – exactly where, when and with whom the research will take place. In opposition to the notion of survey in quantitative research, the aim is to go deep into a definable setting in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific social environment. (Holliday, 2007, p. 33).

Each interview conducted involves a choosing a location and a setting. The most appropriate form of seating, positioning and environment needed to be selected to put the participant at ease and to elicit a free-flowing and unconstrained dialogue. This could be seen as staging the interaction and as I considered the setting or staging of my interviews and my part in arranging them ready for the action that was to ensue, together with my prompt cards and my analysis of the performance that resulted, I began to think along the lines of more of a theatrical setting to the interview situation. This, coupled with the fact that my first research interviewee had previously been an actor, triggered a consideration of a possible congruence with the theatre analogy. Goffman's writing explicitly allied normal human interaction with the performance of drama in terms of impression creation and management (Goffman, 1959). Theatre can be a collaborative form of art that uses live performers to present the experience of a real or imagined event before an audience in a specific place.

My research involved other people, one of whom I knew well, one who was a fellow governor at the same school as myself, one of whom I had met briefly before and one I met for the first time through my studies. For the latter two I physically made initial contact with them and we got the measure of each other at this first meeting. With the person I already knew, I was reshaping and redefining our previous relationship to be more purposeful and business-like. When we met for an interview, I prepared busily: I was a busy body, and also a busybody ready to enquire and, perhaps, pry into their lives. The distinction between the two represents my ambivalence about gaining

knowledge versus being intrusive. The meeting of two people to undertake research through the medium of an interview is formal in the sense that it has been set up – designed, booked and arranged – far away from a casual chance meeting. Such an encounter does not arise naturally and is not necessarily easy to carry out. Many people may find it difficult to express themselves in this setting (Atkinson, 2006). They can be intimidated, not knowing what they are ‘meant’ to say or contribute. There can also be an exaggerating of aspects of the story to please or satisfy the academic ‘expert’ carrying out the research as part of the unconscious dynamics between interviewer and interviewee, a significant subject discussed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000, p. 47).

Interviews

There was an essentially open nature to my interviews, which had just one main question, *Tell me about your motivation to become and remain a school governor*. In this sense, my participants were fully involved from the start with the clear and basic nature of the subject to be explored. There was no hidden agenda, no private categorisation that would take place, no secret scoring system for each of different key words mentioned. The interviews gave the participants every chance for reflexively determining their own motivation or lack of it. In this regard the participants were aware that they were an important part of the process.

The stages of data collection included reflecting straight after the interview and making any notes that were pertinent; listening to the tape; playing the tape slowly enough to transcribe it; hatching ideas as the transcribing process was happening and showing the transcription to the participants. An example of the initial stage of annotating the transcript is included in Appendix IV. A certain amount of dwelling on the overall perception of the interview together with the specific themes and threads that seem to be appearing, came with reading the transcript through. This gave a different perspective as the words had a greater impact and impressions were adjusted in the perception of the researcher to some degree, meaning that even after the event the co-construction continues.

Re-thinking happens as notes were made in the research journal; a dialogue was entered into through presentations made at conferences and seminars, discussions were had with supervisors and other interested parties, emerging themes were identified, literature was consulted, then the analysis needed to be formulated. The interview transcripts were given to peers to read, review and discuss with the researcher and notes were made on

the outcome of this reviewing as part of crystallisation and a final analysis taking into account all of these facets or faces of the crystal was written describing the overarching conclusions that emerged. However, this linear description of the process belies the actual compound and circuitous route through each stage. Becker discusses the tyranny of the fear of using the writing of previous authorities which can *terrorize* the academic author (Becker, 2007a, p. 135). The issues of how to assess relevance and ‘truth’ here remain a challenge, although, or perhaps because, there are more avenues for consideration and reflection. With the multitude of possible perceptions, interpretation and analysis representing different paths that can be taken throughout the research process, trying to settle for a definite meaning from any interaction can be a minefield.

Due to my experience as a non-judgemental interviewer in my working life, I did not have the typical new researcher’s fears about how to interview or undue worries about whether the participant would get anything out of it. In fact this situation was reversed as my first participant was worried about whether she had said anything of interest for me at all. The feelings of participants in qualitative research can be varied and such emotions can be troubling to some. West describes the choice that some participants make to withdraw from the research entirely (1996, p. 30). As a careers counsellor there was a clear overlap between my professional skills and those needed for interviewing research participants. This raised the question of which role I was inhabiting in this context: the researcher or the counsellor? Only one of the participants knew about my professional life, so they would otherwise have been perceiving me as an academic researcher but my careers skillset would have undoubtedly have been assisting me in establishing rapport, encouraging participation and developing trust.

Interviews come in many and varied guises and each researcher needs to decide how to design them so that they are appropriate for the subject being studied. I planned to keep the interviews minimally structured to allow for a full discovery of the narrative description by my participants, this meant not constraining the story, leaving it open for them to feel free to contribute in the way that had most meaning for them. I had an outline plan for the first interview which covered a framework of question areas and possible points of exploration. I drafted out general questions in a mind map prior to the first interview, a form of pictorial planning (Buzan, 2002). These early plans were necessarily quite vague in the early interviews as I did not know what kind of information would be forthcoming. Interviews lasted for approximately an hour and a half and were recorded in order to enable my participants to explain fully how they saw

the experience of being a governor and to define and describe that, including what they saw as involved in it, what it represented in their lives and what significance the issue of motivation had for them.

I interviewed each of my participants twice with a one-year gap in-between to allow time to pass whilst they were carrying out their gubernatorial duties during my research. This allowed time for reflection from the starting interview, where some of the issues about their motivation were considered by them for the first time, and equally allowed me time to assimilate the information they had provided initially, both separately and in comparison to those of the other participants before re-interviewing them. I was interested too to see if their experience during the year of my research resulted in differences in their respective motivation longitudinally over that year. It did in all cases.

In terms of structuring the interviews, I followed a path of introduction, explaining my thesis, my role and the narrative form that I was using, and the participants were encouraged to track back over their past experience and bring us up to the present day. It was important to keep the subject areas quite loose and unstructured as I did not want to influence the areas that arose in the interviews beyond setting the general subject. It felt important to keep the structure flexible and accommodating. This did work in the sense of going where my participants chose to go but also led to problems of having too little control over the subjects discussed, which will be described later.

I did no recording except digitally so I did not take any notes which felt very odd as I usually construct a contemporaneous mind map of each professional interview I conduct in my day job. I felt a bit vulnerable (rightly as it transpired – see technical issues below) by not having any of my own notes taken at the time. I was just actively listening, this meant I could listen more attentively and pay attention to body language, posture, facial expression and other non-verbal signs and cues. Culley & Bond describe the key activity involved in fully hearing another's words: *'Active listening' means that you are listening with purpose and communicating that you have listened.* (Culley & Bond, 2011, p. 29).

The complexities of auto/biographical interviewing present both risks and prizes. In the words of West:

Narratives, like experience itself, are never complete. There is always another perspective, an alternative way of creating meaning and intelligibility from the fragments of experience (West, 1996, p. 217).

I wanted to build in questions about the process of doing this research to ask how it felt to be interviewed and about the process of reflecting on their own motivation. In each case I included time and space at the end of our session for the participants to add anything else they would like to say or to raise any other issues that they would have liked to cover as a form of feedback about the process.

I did experience difficulties with some confusion around the roles of being a helper or being a researcher and the boundaries were at times in danger of getting crossed. Striving for a non-directive, open and neutral approach to a topic I knew a lot about was difficult anyway but it was compounded by the fact that one particular interviewee, Kay, knew about my prior experience as a governor. There was a certain inevitability to the progress of the interview which first turned into a dialogue and then an advice-giving session where Kay asked for guidance, which I felt irritated about the way I responded to this afterwards as I listened to the recording whilst transcribing. This is a real disadvantage of interviewing people known to you. It was also advantageous as, because I knew her, I knew about her becoming a governor, in fact I had suggested to her that she took on the role in the first place although she had forgotten this. This threw up questions of her truth or my truth being the *real* story, neatly illustrated by Josselson who reminds us that auto/biographical writing relates to memory rather than any undisputed truth (Josselson, 1996). Kay's experience of being a new first-time governor in an inner-city special school was of great interest to me and she was keen, even volunteering to be my first research participant.

My questions seemed too wordy in the first place, over-explaining through being slightly anxious about taking the role of researcher rather than interviewer, adviser or friend. It was difficult to be as formal as an interviewer at work; our initial agreed contract felt very false in the light of our long association. My professional training and practice of using the skills of being other-focused and in the moment as a counsellor prompted me to engage on the issues brought up and this was probably not helpful as I would have liked to be less 'present' in the interview but as this interviewee knew I would have a contribution to make on the topics, I felt I could not really hold back (Egan, 2010). By the end of the interview we had moved into a question and answer

session which was way off the point of the research. This was not so much an issue with people not previously known to me.

Another issue was sticking to the brief. At a preliminary trial background interview, (not used in the final research), with a teacher who was an ex-governor, we strayed right off the original point of the topic as she wanted to talk about general issues of school management. This was obviously of interest and relevance to her, as a recent staff governor after many years' experience as a teacher i.e. staffing issues gave her more to talk about than governing issues. However this elision does show that governing is part of real lives and there is less a clear distinction between one role and another than much discrete research work indicates. Eventually I decided the interview about being a governor had finished even though the discussion had not and I turned the recorder off. We carried on talking for another half an hour. In this sense I was editing out material that I felt was less directly applicable to the areas that I wanted to discuss. It could mean that I had chosen a research topic that needed refining or that a more directive interviewing style might need to be developed to keep the focus of the subjects being discussed, or even that how schools are run might not have so much to do with being a governor in reality.

Technical issues

After the end of the first research interview where I had just relied on one (new) digital recorder, I sat down full of excitement, to listen to the material. Then, with a single, fateful, over-eager, mistaken push of a button, I accidentally erased irrevocably the entirety of the 90-minute interview. I thought first that perhaps I could just write up the interview from memory, but as a critical part of the interviewing style is being able to absorb and reflect on the material in some depth, I did really need to have the voice of my interviewee recorded to pick up the exact words, tone of voice, pauses etc. I decided to approach the participant about re-running the interview. Luckily this research subject was a friend of mine and once I had stopped panicking and tearing my hair out, she was delightfully forgiving about having to re-sit the whole experience saying: *I am sure I can think of more interesting things to say this time!* Such disasters no doubt befall many researchers and I was just glad that this was my first exploratory interview and with someone who lived near and whom I knew well enough to admit all to.

I learned to immediately source a second digital recording device so that I always had a back-up and to move straight from recording to carefully backing up the information on

a computer to ensure its permanent capture and retention. I recorded each interview so that I would be able to transcribe each word verbatim and could concentrate on relating and attending to the interviewee during each interview rather than be distracted by taking notes.

Transcripts

Transcribing the interviews took a long time to do completely accurately. I was determined to complete this process as faithfully as possible to ensure that I was using the absolutely identical words uttered in the interview onto which I layered my memories of the experience of the interview itself. This was to counter the decontextualizing that inevitably follows the transcript alone.

Getting from the words and voice of the participant to a paper transcript is a creative process in itself involving certain specific editorial decisions. As such it is not a simple or straightforward task. There is an argument for transcribing completely literally which would include pauses and any sound and a description of all behaviour. Those who argue for total immersion in a script for the purposes of textual analysis say that without inhabiting the script at close quarters the full range of meanings will not emerge. Glimpses and ideas need to be subject to repeated examination to give the researcher the confidence to take an idea forward, to articulate it, to have the nerve to name and label it. (Stanley, 1992).

I decided not to include “ums” and “ahs”, mine or others’. Initially I typed out the exact words spoken ready for sharing with the participant. This was a significant step in itself requiring thought and a decision. One participant had a slight but regular stammer, meaning that he hesitated over many words, using fillers such as “um” very frequently in every sentence. I could not see any reason to include these in the transcript, indeed they got in the way of the meaning of the words and removing them did not alter anything else. However it meant that the transcript read much more succinctly, fluently and speedily than actually occurred in real time. Later I annotated the transcripts after further listening to highlight more specifically what was going on and to note any significant non-verbal behaviour which I recalled and thought was relevant to a fuller understanding of the script. Appendix IV is an example of an annotated transcript.

Sometimes described as ‘empathetic prompts’ are those small noises of agreement and encouragement we emit together with the nods and smiles and personal mannerisms of our own speaking and listening style. My decision was not to include these in written

form but even this decision makes a difference to the transcripts as the words alone can fail to give the essence of a topic that is being agreed upon by the participants through the use of these prompts. The decision meant that the transcript was shorter, simpler and easier to follow but with the loss of some of the complexity of the full picture of the interaction between the two people involved.

Whilst listening to one recording I was struck by the amount of laughter of the participant which I had not noticed before and when I asked her about this later on, although unaware of it at the time, she agreed that it must have been because of the awkwardness of having to talk to me as a researcher when she knew me, together with an element of nervousness at the strangeness of the formality of the situation. This offset her sometimes harsh expressions that the printed words on the page seemed to highlight. I offered the transcription of both of their interviews to each of the participants. This was out of a respect for their agreement to what I was analysing. I was not necessarily going to share my final analysis completely so this was my gesture of transparency early on in the research process.

As I was not testing a hypothesis in my research, but rather asking questions I wanted to explore, and allowing the answers to emerge, I had absolutely no idea about what each participant would say about their own motivation when I first interviewed them. Of course, the analysis of what they said is only my interpretation of their views, so each transcript was shared with the participant and some of my analysis was shared too. Only two of the participants wanted to see and review the transcript after both interviews, one read the first then declined to see the transcript of their second interview. One did not want to see either interview transcript and said, *Why would I want to read it? I said it in the first place!* I took great care with the transcribing to write down every word spoken so was rather surprised when one participant said, *It seems pretty much to be what we discussed.* It was a verbatim copy of every single word that was discussed, so this made me aware of the fact that memories are not necessarily accurate and that the experience of an interview is more than just the literal words spoken and memory can be as much about emotion and impression as a faithful replaying of the original events.

Crystallisation

Testing for reliability – the challenge of finding out if other analysts thought the same of my material - was an interesting proposition and I co-operated with other doctoral

researchers in my immediate circle. I picked three people to review a participant each. Their views through the facets of the crystal were all different to each other and to mine although all were involved in qualitative research of their own. One had a science background; of the other two, one had studied psychology and one was an Italian mature student. They varied in age and all were female. Although they were picked opportunistically as being in my wider research circle, I was pleased at the variations in terms of background between them as I felt this would give more bite to the relative alternative ways we might consider the transcripts.

To be clear about my motivation for this foray into crystallisation, I was curious to know what could be perceived in the transcripts differently to my perception. I was hoping for new ideas and expecting possibly contradictory interpretations to my own. My analysis would not be proved right or wrong by the use of these crystallisation views, but I knew they would give me more stimulæ either to draw additional conclusions or to reinforce my understanding and I intended to include them in the resulting narrative chapters if relevant. Of course, even this exercise was limited as others reading the transcripts were experiencing a quite a different process to the one I experienced as I had been present at the time. Nuances of tone, facial signals, body language, laughter and pauses were all missing when the typescript is considered in isolation. Mitigating circumstances of environment, time of day, location and the actions and facial cues of the interviewer were also completely absent. However, I was keen to at least try this broadening out to incorporate an extra dimension for the reading of each set of interviews. Each person was given transcripts of both interviews with one participant (there was a gap of a year in-between the two interviews) and the instruction was just to read and react to the interviews. I explained why I was conducting this experiment and asked them to make brief notes on any thoughts they had about the interviewee and the material produced. I was just interested in anything that occurred to them about the material, the narrative generally or the interviewee.

The reviewers spotted different aspects of the transcript according to their own interests, outlook and backgrounds. Two were virtually identical to my own reading of the interviews, the other one came up with quite different facets highlighted for note and comment. The person with a science background startled me with her completely different take on the material she reviewed. She perceived an emotional dimension in the interviewee which had completely escaped me, mainly because the presentation of the whole person was different to the partial view provided by the transcripts alone.

This certainly gave me pause for thought and provoked an immediate re-reading of both interviews by me to reconsider this aspect. The other two reviewers focused much more on the language and the specific words used than I had, partly because that was all they had to go on and, possibly partly because their approach to analysis was more specifically text-based than my own so this was their preferred lead-in to deeper analysis. I took their comments as direct challenges to my opinion against which I had to justify my choices of what to include in the narratives. Where relevant, their comments are discussed in the three chapters which follow.

The triangulation or dual methodology approach to research was developed in the 1960s and extended by Denzin. He argued that qualitative researchers should employ multiple instruments to measure variables, thus establishing validity and credibility in their work by analysing a research question from several angles. The thinking here is that multiple and different viewpoints that agree, enhance the credibility and significance of the findings. By creating a triangle of foci around a point in engineering or maths, angles can be fixed and stable, meaning that a true measurement can be taken (Denzin, 1970).

Crystallisation is used by Richardson (1997) in her search for a term that more adequately describes the multitude of ways of seeing to reflect the many different aspects and views that can exist. As a multi-dimensional extension of the triangulation method Richardson uses crystals as a metaphor offering a prismatic view within which refracted and partial views can help us form a view of the whole. Crystallisation, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity' (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic.

Richardson rejects the term triangulation as she argues that the rigidity of the triangle with its two dimensions is unhelpful and adds little in a research context. Her radical paradigm shift is to introduce the concept of crystallisation to blend creative and analytical forms of representation. The prism of the crystal in contrast gives an infinite variety of shapes, viewpoints, angles of approach and is multidimensional. Additionally the crystal itself distorts and reflects the image. By using this metaphor she undermines the search for 'validity' by proclaiming the ability and the need for garnering more complex and numerous views, *Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know.* (Richardson, 1997, p. 92). Richardson makes the claim that the search for truth is a dead

end that will never silence the critics of subjective interviewing and in fact only obscures the benefits of the rich material which flows from narrative interviewing.

Eschewing this struggle between objectivity and subjectivity, she argues for a new way of looking at the material, one that celebrates the lack of precision, makes opportunities of the blurred boundaries and which endeavours to increase the possibilities rather than focus them down,

Today, the postmodernist critique is having the same impact on social sciences that science studies and gender have had, and for similar reasons.

Postmodernism identifies unspecified assumptions that hinder us in our search for understanding “truly”, and it offers alternative practices that work. We feel its “truth”- its moral, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, intuitive, embodied, playtime pull (Richardson, 1997, p. 95).

Here Richardson argues for multiple forms of analysis and many genres of representation such as fiction, poetry, art and photography to be constructed into a multi-faceted account that includes the researcher’s own position, the nature of the co-construction with the participants and makes explicit the dilemmas and complexities of any such approach.

Ellingson takes the metaphor further with her subdivision into integrated and dendritic crystallisation. Integrated crystallisation involves producing a written or visual text that combines multiple genres, using the metaphor of the quilt which can be “woven or patched” i.e. combined together or sequential (Ellingson, 2009, p. 97). Dendritic crystallisation is compared to a snowflake with branching out patterns, unpredictability, uniqueness and where, *researchers expect and invite radically different ways of knowing to shift their projects* [original emphasis] (Ibid. p. 127) which may bring together contrasting epistemologies. She continues: *Moreover, crystallization enables researchers to push the envelope of the possible, . . .* (Ibid., p. 16).

Careers guidance context

In my professional background as a careers specialist, part of my work is as a careers counsellor. In-depth interviewing is a developed way of working in my profession so this method had attractions as it was familiar and was therefore a comfortable way to conduct research. I trained in these skills on a full-time post-graduate Diploma in Careers Guidance which included practical interview techniques (South Bank

University, 1986) and I have taught and assessed students in interview skills at Master's level since then, (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2011 — 2015). People come to me in my private practice for help with their career choice, to explore difficulties at work or for help to apply, or be interviewed for, a new job or promotion. I interview people, one-to-one, normally at my home, for up to two hours at a time to explore their career ideas and aims. I charge for this service and have been doing this for over 20 years. In the course of these interviews a great deal of qualitative material arises. I focus to analyse what I am hearing as the interview progresses and as people tell me their life stories as related to their careers. I feedback my interpretations, in the main conducted contemporaneously, which are then discussed with the client and more discussion ensues.

I was trained in and use the Egan model of counselling as a client-centred interaction which aims to be as transparent as possible, making the process visible and accessible (Egan, 2010). When involved in my professional helping relationship I am operating on two levels, listening and reacting to the words, expressions and body language as they occur as well as gathering a sense of the person as a whole, their background, beliefs, potential, significant moments and desires too. In this respect I am present in the interview listening actively and also reflecting throughout about the bigger picture, working out where the interview might go and acutely aware of the needs of the interviewee for feedback, suggestions and summaries. Merrill and West refer to this as a “capacity for distance” after Hunt (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 149). Careers counselling is a combination of using psychological and sociological insights, working through aspects of the individual’s personality as well as the societal opportunities and barriers that may be faced to help or hinder career progress, in whatever terms that has meaning for the client (Reid, 2015).

There are big differences between the interviewing that I was used to through this professional work and my role of interviewer for academic research purposes. The main one is that giving guidance is part of my professional role which does involve some direction although on the careers counselling practice spectrum, I am at the counselling end rather than at the directional end. Instead of advising and teaching, basing my style on Egan's counselling model, I work with clients as a facilitator to enable them to come to conclusions about the way forward for themselves, after agreeing how we will work together, laying out the issues, considering the options available and discussing what they want to achieve (Egan, 2010). The purpose of the generation of the narrative is to

ascertain the main issues, feelings, threads and connections in the story. The interaction of this type with clients is driven by the desire by the client for some development. The desire for development in careers guidance work does not necessarily mean that any specific action or change has to result. For some clients, letting things remain the same is seen to be a good outcome (Corfield, 1995). Development here can be defined widely to mean in understanding or looking at options.

Information is needed from the client in order to take forward the service being offered to them. However, this is very different from academic interviewing which can be in order to gain information and understanding along any line that the research subject chooses to contribute. Professionally the work interaction focuses on career issues for the most part, indeed I refer clients to other specialists such as therapeutic counsellors if the need arises.

Longitudinal element

The nature of the research carried out is one area of uniqueness. Using interviews is not so unusual but the unstructured nature of the interviews and having so few of them conducted in depth allows for the emergence of a very personal life story of the individuals concerned. Such a subjective emphasis is open to criticism and a defence of this specific method is important. Hearing the story of the individual's entry into governorship plus their history of being a governor gives a personalised view of what was important. By definition this offered a unique and different take on the process that no observed analysis could make. The words chosen to describe this journey are also selected by the participants themselves with unstructured interviews meaning that no direction was set and participants were free to choose what to describe and what to include. With each interview being approximately one and a half hours long, plus being revisited a year later, this resulted in substantial amounts of material or data to be analysed. Such a type of enquiry is rare and for this particular field, unique.

The second unique aspect of the methodology was the longitudinal aspect of re-interviewing the participants again after a year's duration. Things had changed in the intervening period, views were sharpened, experiences had been felt and the motivation to remain a governor had developed in turn. The aim of adding in this longitudinal element to the research was to be able to find out if the circumstances of the governing role had changed over this time period so that the narratives were more than just a single snapshot. In discussions with each participant when completing the ethical

consent forms, this aspect was explicitly discussed and verbal permission was given in each case at the end of the first interview, for a second follow-up interview to be timetabled for a year hence.

Additionally this element of the research aimed to build an iterative process into the work. The extra chance for continued dialogue and a developing of the relationship between myself and my participants meant that their stories might deepen or even change. Different stories could be told as time moved on, and my understanding too could evolve and progress at each stage.

g) Analysis

Interpretation may prove challenging and subjective as all research is subject to differing interpretations. With my research material, there was no guarantee that any of the material would lead to any particular conclusion either. Exploratory research does just that – explores new territory and attempts to examine what it finds, suggesting insights that might be illuminating.

Denscombe outlines five disadvantages of qualitative research (Denscombe, 1998, p. 304). The data might not be representative, and the generalisability is more open to doubt than with quantitative research. Interpretation is bound up with the ‘self’ of the researcher as the basic assumption is that the findings are a creation of the researcher rather than a discovery of fact, although in this case facts of the person’s lived experience, by definition, are also subjectively experienced in the main. There is a possibility of decontextualizing the meaning, as words and phrases are lifted from an interview for analysis and may lose their original meaning through the interpretation. There is the danger of oversimplifying the explanation in order to make some sense of a wealth of ‘rich’ description about complex social phenomena.

The analysis takes time due to the great volume of material collected and the need for the involvement of the researcher (rather than computational methods) for sense-making to occur through interpretation rather than counting (Denscombe, 1998, p. 304). Other forms of thinking around art, literature, fictionalisation and performance were methods contributing to the analysis rather than the collection of data. So narrative was key here and it was biographical because I explored aspects of identity and being and belonging with my participants, their narrative was unregulated by structured interview questions or directed topics for discussion.

Winslade and Monk describe how personal narratives are constructed from a variety of sources by which individuals are influenced, *The stories we live by are not produced in a vacuum*. They go on to elaborate, *They are products of conversations, often many conversations by many people, in a social context*. (Winslade and Monk, 2007, p. 29). Getting beyond the simple: *What happened?* questions, we move beyond description to delve more deeply into underlying thoughts and motivations. Researching motivation essentially necessitated asking the more complex, *Why was that?* question, or *What prompted that?*

Making firm decisions about the material only occurred for me towards the end of the process, through an iterative process of reflection and revisiting, which allowed ideas to percolate through, having read more literature and then returning to the material again, at the same time as the writing up of the process. This forced a commitment to what was being analysed and necessitated a decisive judgement. At every stage of writing there were many possibilities which needed to be selected in or out. This required both confidence and courage and the evidence on which they needed to be based. Making good choices, or at least good enough choices, required a thorough analytical tool to help sift through the possibilities.

Using a proforma

West designed a proforma to facilitate taking the narrative interview material forward and this proforma was chosen as the model for the analysis process. He describes the purpose of the proforma thus:

...as an analytic space through which to understand more of the whole, including the relationship in the here and now, which might provide clues to how a life had been lived (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 137).

As an authority on auto/biographical narrative interviews, West's proforma for analysis is a clear and helpful template to use, highlighting the themes, process, ethnographics and gestalt of each interview. It offers specific areas to peruse whilst allowing flexibility according to the nature of the narratives collected. Deceptively simple in its limited four categories, in fact it asks demanding open questions of the researcher. By representing subtitles over spaces to be filled, the onus is put on the analyst to fill in the gaps and make choices. The proforma is reproduced in Appendix V.

The question of the gestalt of the interview is important. Grounded theory or other highly systematised models of analysis break down the data through careful coding of the words used (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 142). In that approach, the form becomes all, the theory is developed systematically from the material and the shape of the whole is largely unrecorded. In acknowledging that feelings, stated or embodied, are significant, I opted to stay with the whole.

As Merrill and West state:

The intention was to integrate data, interpretation, theory and process insights into a living document. Proformas can provide space to 'play' imaginatively and thoughtfully with every aspect of our engagement with others and their stories (Merrill and West, 2009: 137).

The analysis using the proforma was a slow and involved process without a clear linear path. Becoming immersed in the material allows for deep reflection and means that thoughts occur at different times. West's structure for approaching analysis suggests an immersion in the material through listening to the voices, reading and re-reading the transcripts to identify auto/biographical ideas, threads and connections. As a result of this immersion, to start of the analytical process, a pen portrait can emerge of each participant. Hollway and Jefferson add that such a written portrait serves as a replacement 'whole' for any reader who was not present at the interview but who needs a sense of the person behind the material (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

This was what lent itself to the ultimate choice of a single narrative portrayal in the written thesis, as the pen portrait served as a representation and introduction to the person originating each narrative and is deeply contextually informed and each participant stands as a separate case to be considered. West offers that by focusing on a single account of an individual's life story, complex themes can emerge from the rich material (West, 1996). The pen portrait serves as a brief summary of the person before the themes and other conclusions are drawn out. As with any portrait it paints a picture, creates an image and shows us a view of the person. It gives a background and basic information about the speaker of the words, the teller of the story, at the preliminary stage before the narrative has been selected, interpreted and presented to the reader.

It made sense to continue the focus on the individuals concerned, albeit in an anonymised state, by displaying the in-depth results person-by-person as discrete

chapters in the final work. Each is a descriptive piece and gives an initial personal history and situation of the person concerned. It attempts to enable the reader to 'see' the participant and to understand the standpoint from which that person is participating in the research. As such the material used is highly selective and partial. Whilst this is true of the whole of the analysis to some extent and is the rationale for the auto/biographical element of the approach, it was in writing these seemingly simple and short pen-portraits that the responsibility for representing an 'other' in a couple of paragraphs, hit home in this thesis.

The first stage of the proforma was to look for themes which seem important, these could be from transitions and managing the changing identities which result; they could reflect the interplay of past and present; they could highlight the interplay of the personal and the professional or may feature other people and their relationship to the narrator. In my interviews this concluded with a plethora of themes from which I subsequently had to select the most significant after working through stage four (below).

The second stage of the proforma approach was to examine any relevant issues from the process. Process here relates to the experience of the interview, how it went and exactly what the circumstances were of each encounter. This includes the power and sensitivities of the discourse, seamless and expected progress, actions and intentions, results, beginnings and endings, how to wrap up and open up, niceties and pleasantries, formalities and much more. I was the only one who was there to report on this, my participants seemed comfortable and one of these positively enjoyed it and thanked me for providing her with an opportunity for reflection and reflexivity.

The third element of the proforma was the ethnographics, including the setting, timing, the flow and interruptions, the interrelationships, the lived experience of the interview and any embodied feelings. The fourth and final stage was identifying any gestalt, from the German, meaning overall form or shape. This involved looking for patterns of thoughts or behaviours which may have led to a significance which had overridden specific themes or threads and indicated an overarching implication or meaning. The addition of a longitudinal element through the repeated interviews allowed differences between the two interactions for each participant to be highlighted. This was marked in two cases where the circumstances of being a school governor had changed significantly in the duration.

I identified two further stages in terms of analysing the material: the fifth was in applying theoretical approaches to the material to embed ideas fully. Drawing on useful and appropriate authors to highlight motivation, identify themes or issues and to elicit resonance across time or space added depth and resonance. The sixth was in editing the material to construct a new narrative about the person, the interaction and the material. In one sense this is reportage and direct quotations add to this, but it is also the generation of a new story from the material and the ideas and responses of the interviewer. With and through the interviewee I constructed a new narrative about what it meant to be a school governor and the positive motivation (or lack of it) to continue in the role. The interviews were re-visited many times in the course of the analysis and this repeated reflection over time calls upon Andrews' views about the way that reflections and impressions can change over time (Andrews et al, 2009).

The most significant choices in the analysis stage come about from deciding the most significant aspects of the interview and the selection of material to illustrate this. Richardson claims that writing is a process of discovery and that when writers view their work as a process – not as a definitive representation, this can liberate them (Richardson, 1997). The first step or top level of analysis was seeing what was being discussed. The drawing of local conclusions about specific issues led to more general ideas about the governor role as a whole. A level of dissatisfaction about particular governing issues repeated often enough gives the impression of an overall feeling of disappointment with the experience. This needs to lead to conclusions about the significance of that feeling. So if someone is dissatisfied, does that fact in itself point to issues at a micro, meso institutional level and macro cultural level that could helpfully be changed to ensure future narratives are more positive?

Narrative format

Writing this research was a slow and painful process which tallies with Hoult's view that many researchers experience difficulties in their work and this struggle can be part of the creative whole (Hoult, 2012). Structuring or displaying the results is an issue to be considered. My participants were all discussing the same voluntary role and there were similarities between them. They all told their own story and in different ways and voices to each other. I considered thematic organisation of the thesis and this was how I began thinking about the research material as the narratives were all qualitatively varied. One of my early conclusions was that the individual comes with his or her own

history, personality and psychological priorities which meld into their respective motivations. The narratives were all diverse, rich and personal and to respect and celebrate that, I chose to give them a chapter each. Richardson took a radical step by turning aspects of her interviews into narrative poems and found her work altered permanently as a result (Richardson, 1997). Decisions about how to display research material can have an impact on the reader, Richardson discusses her thought-process here,

'Louisa May's Story of her life' is a narrative poem I created from an in-depth interview with 'Louise May', an unwed mother. I used only Louisa May's words, syntax and grammar. My desire was to integrate the poet and the scientist in me and to explore the epistemological bases of sociological knowledge. But transforming a transcript into a poem has transformed my life (Richardson, 1997, p. 135).

My analyses were written evaluating both interviews with each participant – and each forms one chapter of the thesis (Merrill & West, 2009). The complexity of the presentations which follow is presented in a particular context as a method of exploring the experience of four governors to see how they consider their own motivation. In the literature review, established authors whose views seemed to have something to contribute were outlined and their specific congruence with the individual account is highlighted in each chapter as it arises. The fact that each of these chapters relates to just one person is the reason for describing them as narratives. They are constructed not just from the words of the participants, but also from the perceptions gained by the researcher and after the analytical process of consideration, repetition, and insight produced over time; from reflective reading and discussion and comparison and contrast. When interviewing the participants began, the final structure for the thesis was unplanned. In getting to know the stories of the three governors whose stories I used and my own, the degree to which their own personalities dictated their motivation indicated that the best way to both represent this and highlight it would be by focusing on one person's story at a time.

Narratives can be written in different ways. Even with discrete narratives, the writing can be organised around themes or topics brought up by the participant. I took the decision that the representations that follow should honour the way that the story was described to me in the interviews, most often in the form of a chronological description

of how the participant first got involved in the business of governing, followed by probing questions about various aspects of what they had said for more information or clarity. This allowed me to pick out those aspects that seemed most significant whilst still giving a flavour of the original interviews. I want to encourage the reader to draw conclusions too by feeling that they can experience a relevant précis of the three hours of interview material from each participant. Plummer suggests that one of the elementary issues relating to research conducted in the real world is: ... *that it is a messy, human affair: if it is not, then it is time to worry* (Plummer, 2001, p. 122).

The advantage of a narrative format is that the individual can speak for him or herself. By allowing a whole chapter to each, the story of each person is given equal weight. When considering an individual response such as motivation it seemed important to give each participant the same space, even though some stories are more in-depth, varied and dramatic than others. It allowed the size and shape of the group of participants to be reflected in the size and shape of the thesis. It allows too for adequate relating to established authors to find meaning and significance pertaining to the narrative. A disadvantage is that in valuing the whole story, chances may be missed in the separation of one case from another. The weaving of theoretical strands between the narratives may be reduced and even overlooked. Another disadvantage is that duplication of threads and themes can ensue with a single focus for each chapter. This did happen here, as I did have another participant whose interviews I decided not to include in the final research, as due to the chosen format, there was a danger of repetition.

Evaluation

Although the merits of qualitative research have to be subjectively evaluated, Richardson proposed the following criteria for assessing the worth of creative analysis, whether: a substantive contribution was provided to understanding; there was aesthetic merit in the work as a creative piece; sufficient reflexivity was shown by the author with regard to her role and an awareness of the impact of the work, and there was an expression of a reality in the work which resonates as a credible, embodied account (Richardson, 2000).

In qualitative research, judgments of validity focus primarily on the interpretation of findings: on the extent to which such interpretations adequately account for observations in relation to the context, acknowledge potential researcher bias, and

provide explanatory coherence within a larger theoretical frame. It is important to emphasise that validity in either quantitative or qualitative research is not an absolute notion nor can validity be “proven”. Rather, a high level of validity is a goal to strive for. According to Plummer, representativeness might be more appropriately considered by thinking what it is that the narratives actually represent, (Plummer, 2001). An example can be found in Appendix VI which shows an extract of an interview using the proforma structure, annotated with my initial comments and rationalisations.

h) Conclusion

Andrews makes great claims for the worth of the narrative imagination,

If we can abandon our paths of certainty, and thus render ourselves vulnerable to new ways of knowing, we will not only be transformed in the process, but we can, in our small way, contribute towards creating new realities. This possibility of renewal and change is one of the greatest gifts of our narrative imagination (Andrews, 2014, p. 115).

The results of my research are presented in the form of chapters about each individual participant and the three narratives of my participants follow based on the material arising from the interviews. Kay, Alison and Thomas describe their motivation to become and remain governors. My own auto/biographical chapter comes after theirs. After these narratives I re-visit some of the issues arising from the methodology, including ethical issues to discuss the significant points which arose. I then move on to conclude the outcomes and learning points from the research and summarise any further questions that were suggested which could lead to future research. The final chapter gives my own conclusions about the findings including the implications for future research and the impact of my research on policy and practice.

Chapter 4: KAY'S NARRATIVE

Chapter 4: Kay's narrative - "A frustrating experience".

Then what is this if it isn't telling me? Sure, he was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were.

Miller, A. *All My Sons*, 1947.

a) Introduction

This chapter explores the material provided during the course of two interviews with Kay regarding her foray into governorship. Throughout this chapter all schools, places and names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The expressed point of the research was to find out about the motivation of school governors firstly when becoming a governor and secondly when remaining as one. I asked Kay to consider what her motivation had been when she first stood as a governor a year before the first research interview. The second interview followed 14 months later and was an opportunity for an update on Kay's motivation after the first interview. It was also a chance to reflect back to her the main ideas that I perceived she clearly identified at the previous interview. It encouraged the gaining of some sense of changes in her motivation to introduce a longitudinal element to the narrative of her experience in this role and there had indeed been changes in the way she felt about the role.

I was the person who put being a governor in her mind originally. As a governor myself and knowing that she had some time she could devote to the school, I thought this friend of mine would have a lot to offer - opinions, commitment to special needs education and wide life experience. When she heard about my research, she offered to be a participant as she had just become a governor at her son's state secondary school for pupils with special needs in London. This was helpful as she was a parent governor and I was sure would provide interesting material and would be available over time for me to monitor her changing perceptions about her motivation.

Kay's story is one of early enthusiasm to be a governor, followed by a slow growth of disillusionment with, and eventually antipathy to, the role. She had started as a governor shortly before the first research interview took place and was still quite keen during that interview and trying to be constructive about some of the difficulties she was encountering. None of us enter in to these voluntary endeavors neutral, we take in the sum of who we are, our experiences and our history. As the first interview progressed, I

felt a level of anxiety about whether Kay's manifold talents were going to be appreciated at this school and whether her slightly abrupt manner might alienate the school leadership. By the time of the second interview she was experiencing significant hurdles to making a contribution which she was finding too difficult to overcome.

A new governor at the start of the narrative, Kay shared a tale of an enthusiastic start, followed by a mismatch of expectations, leading to a demoralising ending. In this chapter Kay described the initial high hopes of the contribution that she could make as a governor. However the experience once in post was full of difficulties in relation to the staff and specifically the leadership of the school. Either they did not appreciate her eager involvement or there was a personality clash of some kind, in any event, the result was a distinct lack of recognition for her efforts. Repeated attempts to highlight the important educational issues as she saw them resulted in power struggles with the senior management which ultimately defeated her. The overriding impression was one of a series of constraints on her activity and involvement, leading to her disengagement.

Personal aspects seemed to be most prevalent here, the hope for finding a role for herself emerged from the transcripts followed by the pain of not being allowed to contribute and the awkwardness of being rebuffed for her efforts. Kay's story shows that any role we inhabit can involve deep-seated feelings of wanting to be appreciated and valued which we seek at a subconscious emotional level. These feelings can underpin more overtly stated motives. Honneth's (1995) work on this subject is particularly relevant to Kay's governorship as he described the need to be able to participate in groups in order to be recognized by others to access feelings of self-respect. The extracts from Kay's interviews that follow show her inability to be accepted and valued by the group and the consequences of the ensuing struggle.

b) The back story

There was a back story to this narrative that is not normally present in research interviewing in that Kay was very well known to me before the research began. When I first met Kay and her husband at our ante-natal classes, I was struck by their good manners and politesse. The friendship which began that day has been a relationship that has seen various ups and downs in the lives of both Kay and myself which have led to a close and familiar friendship. We had enjoyed a jovial and light-hearted relationship over the years since. A life-changing event was that her baby, who was born the day before mine, and in the very same hospital, was diagnosed at the age of two to be on the

autistic spectrum. Now a teenager, John is quiet and placid and his intellectual development has been very slow and faltering. Kay has always maintained an accepting and resolute attitude about his care although life is not easy with an autistic son. It creates strains in the family and inevitable social isolation. She said that I am one of the few people to whom she talks about John. This study in particular being about a close friend offered challenges in deciding what to include or omit, a dilemma familiar to Ellis in her ethnographic writing about her relationships with her partner and students (Ellis, 2001). My research interviews with Kay were laid on top of 16 years of discussion, friendship, and observation about her life, motivation and personality and the familiarity with the experience of having a son with a major learning disability which I have seen affect every area of her life.

We had not had conflicts in our friendship as we were only involved at a social level as family friends, so had not tested or articulated the power relations between us. How else could this be judged? I asked for her opinion about how she saw our friendship. She said that she used me as someone to talk to honestly about how she feels about life, family and work issues, particularly when life was difficult or frustrating. She did not put me on a pedestal, we were quite happy to challenge each other if we thought the other was wrong and through many years of regular contact we knew each other well. However even if this was a relationship of equals, one of the features of deep friendship is a set pattern of behavior, of call and response, habitual roles played as observed in Berne's classic work *Games People Play* (Berne, 1964).

Interviewing those known to us in other capacities can have both pros and cons. Personal ethical issues arose which were never covered in the ethical committee of my university. The drawback of the established relationship between us meant that it felt awkward to establish a 'new' researcher/research participant interaction. In fact the issues around being friends proved to be ever more complex as the research progressed. Although both interviews with Kay were conducted with some formality and with an attempt not to cover topics from outside the subject, it was impossible to keep to that dividing line. Every thought about, reaction to and understanding of what she described was informed by twenty years of association, shared experiences and interpretation. Previous knowledge of her skills, abilities, strengths, private life, hopes and dreams was all there. On a spectrum of intimacy, as a friend, Kay was on the right-hand side (see Figure 3, p. 92).

In an attempt to creatively play with the material to increase understanding, I drew on the work of Speedy (2008) who advocated interpreting narratives through the frame of different forms of literature. Using Goffman's (1959) work on dramaturgy as a prompt, I made a short third person story out of the first interview experience with Kay:

The doorbell rings and the poised blonde stands outside.

"Here I am!" she announces in a sing-song voice, laughing and holding up a bottle of wine. After dealing with hugs and the coat, they walk into the living room of the house, chatting. The atmosphere is upbeat and both of them are looking forward to the encounter. They like each other and enjoy being in each other's company so the prospect of an evening together, even if focused on the research topic, is a pleasant one. Kay heads straight for the sofa once she enters the lounge where she is used to sitting on social occasions, until she is directed to sit at the table instead.

"Oh", she says, slightly surprised, then obediently sits in the more formal arrangement up at the table. This signifies that the evening will be slightly different, more work-like, than normal. This is new.

The wine is poured and the interview begins. Kay refills her glass fairly frequently during the interview whereas Rebecca makes one glass last for the duration. She feels she needs to be clear-headed and relatively sober in order to carry off this interview. A cat wanders in and out, curiously. It is a re-run of the same event a week before because that interview did not get properly recorded. This gives them both an odd sense of déjà vu. Rebecca suddenly turns uncharacteristically very serious when the recording device is switched on through which Kay understands that this bit has to be done properly.

They both have nerves. One of them is worried that she will not have anything very interesting to say and that the interviewer will be disappointed in her. The other is anxious that the whole interview experience will be tedious for the interviewee. There is a lot of laughter at times. This is not unusual with the two of them but is perhaps a sign of the release of their mutual tension and a reflection of the wine bottle getting emptying as the interview progresses.

The interview veers into more of a conversation for a while – Rebecca finds it difficult not to join in to create a discussion at times when they are talking about

shared experiences, especially at one point when Kay asks for guidance about an aspect of being a governor. Rebecca's job is giving advice and she finds it hard to stop herself from slithering back into that role. She is trying to inhabit the newer role of researcher – listening, not talking and encouraging full engagement from Kay. Rather than one of Alan Bennett's Talking Heads monologues, this becomes more of a duet because sometimes it feels as though a level of engagement would be lost without it.

I subsequently showed Kay the short scene I had created. She agreed that it allowed more commentary on the action and was interested to read it. Ultimately the significance of it was with me in terms of analysis of the scene, more fully to scrutinise the significance of the fact that we were close friends before the interviews which was bound to have been an element in the interaction.

c) Pen portrait

At the time of the research, Kay was in her mid-50s, a graduate, who had been an actor, and occasionally still was. I saw a commercial in which she appeared and she had great talent. She still performed from time to time with a singing cabaret trio. She most recently worked part-time as a private caterer providing food and service for dinner parties at several hundred pounds a time. She was married to James, who worked as an Administrative Manager for a small importing business. Kay was a no-nonsense person, who could sound slightly hasty and impatient at times. She was definite in her opinions and brisk in her movements, she bustled around. She was the sort of person who always looks well-groomed. She came over as poised and practical with a ready smile with crisp, clear enunciation. She spoke in a sing-song voice. Kay as an ex-actor had considerable presence and presented a confident exterior although this might just have been an example of the excellent projection of a skilled thespian.

I would call her, in common with a lot of actors who like wearing real or figurative masks, slightly shy but with strong views. Her speech was fast and she had a quick-fire delivery (if her speech was a dance it would be a quickstep) and this made her come across as a bit abrupt and intolerant sometimes when she blurted things out, full of what she was wanting to say but delivered slightly hastily. She also had a slightly plummy voice so this made her sound very middle class which had echoes of intolerance. Not a good mix to present to a hard-pressed senior teacher team perhaps. I wondered if this had ever irritated the Head Teacher at the school.

d) The interviews

The setting for both encounters was my house where Kay had been many times before. We sat at the dining table in the lounge which was more business-like and purposeful than the sofa on which we normally sat to chat when meeting socially. I arranged the setting and directed the interview. I was used to sitting at the dining table (never used for dining) when I worked with visiting careers counselling clients but it was the first time Kay had ever sat at the table rather than in an easy chair at my house. The second interview took place mid-morning over a year later and both interviews took approximately an hour and a half to conduct.

My first reaction to hearing the recording of the first interview was that there was frequent laughter from Kay as she talked, more than I would expect from her. It signified to me that she felt slightly ill at ease. This could have been embarrassment due to the unusual formal nature of the encounter; due to her feeling under scrutiny and under the spotlight, although as an actor she is used to this, but not talking about herself. I did not pick this up until after the interview so this was an issue I asked her view about at the second interview. I elicited her reaction to the transcript of the first interview, and she was horrified at how inarticulate the printed word seemed to make her sound. This is one of the difficulties of sharing a verbatim transcript; in speech, hesitancy and partial sentences come across as all part of the flow, whereas on paper these can make the interchange seem very jumpy and tangled.

Both interviews with Kay proceeded smoothly and this reflected our ease in each other's company. I noticed specifically in the second interview when Kay was laughing that there seemed to be a pattern to this in that she laughed for two reasons. The first was at explicit jokes and then the second and more frequent was when she was expressing a difficulty around being a governor or about a conflict with the Head Teacher. This seemed to be a defensive, self-mocking laugh to cover up and mitigate feelings of doubt, shame, almost to apologise for her stance (KT2, pp. 4, 8). There may have been an uncovered issue here around taking authority as a woman, not knowing how to do it, having to manipulate to get it (Dickson, 1982). The dilemma of being both in a parent and a governor role could have created role confusion with Kay not feeling comfortable or securely located in either role. This seems to be an example of what Goffman (1959) refers to as an *unmeant gesture* which reveals a lack of expressive control when underlying feelings escape through words which may contradict them (1959, p. 59).

I have experienced a transition from interviewer to researcher. As an experienced interviewer, my careers counselling experience over the last twenty-five years has followed more of a narrative style, asking people in a very open format about themselves, their lives, their influences, their hopes and dreams. My research interviews in contrast seemed much more focused, asking about the specific topic of governing. Many new researchers feel anxiety and fear about conducting an interview with no boundaries to the subjects that can be covered, addressed by Merrill and West (2009, p. 125), whereas for me the opposite was true and I felt initially that my research interview with Kay was a bit clumsy and leaden because of the parameters I put on the topic to be discussed. This was compounded by knowing the participant well; it felt awkward to be conducting a fairly formal and focused discussion in an interview situation with a close friend as I don't normally instruct my close friends about the subject we are going to talk about. I realised that I had not mentally adjusted to this new experience. A more collaborative approach would have been to share designing the questions with Kay during the interview itself perhaps, but this could have been counteractive and possibly equally cumbersome. Egan (1980) underlines the need for active listening, that is empathetic and helps contain the emotions shared in the interview situation, when difficult topics arise.

The script extracts below give Kay's partial answers to my pre-planned questions but do not give enough of a sense of who the person providing the answers is, or her fuller story. Because she was known to me, I did not start by finding out who she was, or how she would describe herself. If she had been a new contact, I would have needed more background to find out hints about her values and world-view to be able to identify and contextualise her outlook and approach. However, as Andrews et al state, the challenge of narrative research is to define, locate and unearth the starting and finishing points, the themes and the meaning (Andrews et al., 2009).

It occurred to me with the question of a gestalt in mind after the first interview that I needed to elicit more of a narrative approach with Kay. By gestalt here I am referring to the seeing of a larger picture beyond that of the component parts. The process we went through in the first interview was focused on the direct and presented issue of governorship and so was very business-like but possibly too limited. I also talked a lot because of the existing easy relationship between us. A deeper understanding could have come from a more general exploration. Her thoughts and insights about her background needed to be tested out and explored to see if they shed light on the themes

she identified and any emerging ideas she may have. In that sense I needed to loosen up the structure and try less hard to direct the conversation. Using a theatre analogy, this could be seen to mean moving away from a directed and scripted piece to more of an improvisation.

Another issue was that of our previous friendship and how Kay saw this as either a strength or a weakness and what influence she thought it may have had on the collection of our interview material. There are pros and cons to interviewing friends and we talked about this. On the whole Kay saw it as a strength and admitted it was difficult to stay in the role of the researched when she would rather ask advice sometimes (KT2, p. 36).

I was interested to follow-up on the feelings and perceptions Kay had of our first interview to see if she had reflected on the process and on her answers. She did say to me after the first interview that she had been worried that I would find her thoughts: *not exciting enough*, and she was pleased at being able to re-run it after the recording failure so that she: *could think of more interesting things to say*, to me. I reassured her that it was all interesting material for me but I subsequently explored her feelings of doubt and hesitation further as they may have represented an example of her wanting to please me. Could this be a sign that she felt less powerful than me in the interviews? If so this could be matched by my simultaneous worries that she might find talking about governorship a very dreary topic.

e) Three levels of analysis

In the first interview there were four main threads that Kay identified as part of her motivation to become a governor. First was to do the best for her child, to become more visible as a parent within the school and therefore be able to hold the school more to account. Many parent governors join both to see more about the way the school runs and to be seen as an interested and 'present' parent. This could be seen as a selfish reason in that it springs from self-interest. For Kay it is possibly relevant that John was a quiet boy who would be easy to overlook. He did not have any challenging behaviour and was timid in his manner. I felt slightly awkward reflecting this reason back to Kay in the second interview, as it felt a less noble reason than the others. She said yes, it was a motivating factor for her. However over the course of the research this motivation has not established her any more firmly in the school as evidenced by the fact that John still had no friends to play with out of school. It may be that a more theoretical issue can be identified connected with Kay's relationship with her son. It could be that her anxiety to

find friends for John was her attempt at seeking relationships of love for him in the form of school friends. It is a lonely life with a single teenager who does not easily socialise as is sometimes the case with young people on the autistic spectrum. It could be that Kay was seeking social connectedness for herself too as being recognised by a parent in a similar position would enhance feelings of coping and dealing with life's difficulties. It could be that Honneth's pinpointing of the need for love as a first order basic human requirement for self-confidence was relevant here.

The second reason Kay gave was to encourage more parental involvement as there was not much in this inner city special school. Special needs schools have few pupils in total and, according to Kay, some parents can have more than one child with special needs in the family (KT1, p. 13). Parents are not necessarily involved with the school at all and many of the usual events such as music concerts and summer fairs are more difficult to organise in such an environment. This area is a much more problematic one to change. Kay's early suggestions for parents' events were not taken up although this area may be more left to the Parent Teacher Association. She was trying to move forward by generating ideas on this front but lack of money and lack of support from others meant that there had been no progress. I wondered where all the other governors were in these debates as they never appeared in her testimony; this sense of isolation must have added to her feeling that there was neither a team atmosphere nor a team effort at work. Wider questions could have been present about special needs provision in a time of austerity, together with the anxiety about a child's long-term future in times of economic uncertainty. One of the benefits of being in a school for special needs, as opposed to a mainstream school was that properly funded resources could be available for the benefit of the pupils. It seemed to still be a struggle to harness the appropriate teaching in the school.

The third motivation Kay highlighted was that she was flattered to be asked to stand as a governor by another parent. In my experience of political involvement, women in particular often only seriously consider taking on a role if specifically asked to do so. Putnam (2000) cites American research findings which echoes this point for both sexes,

As fund-raisers and volunteer organisers know well, simply being asked to give is a powerful stimulus to volunteering and philanthropy. When volunteers are asked how they happened to get involved in their particular activity, the most common answer is: "Someone asked me" (2000, p. 121).

The fourth reason she said was important to her was to participate in voluntary work in the community. She said on the second interview that making or finding the time was difficult. To help identify common areas of her motivation, Kay's responses about her reasons for becoming and remaining a governor have been considered under three broad levels of motivational factors, the first is the micro or the personal or psychological level. The second is the meso or institutional level and the third is the macro or societal level. When first faced with the large amount of information arising from a research interview, these three levels were a useful way of grouping the different strands of the participant's thinking in order to sub-divide the responses given, into areas with similar content. This collating of responses together may have blunted some of the subtleties of the responses, however it produced more identifiable, manageable and clearer areas for analysis. Although it is not possible to fully understand another person, what she said in the interviews gives insights into what her thought processes were and therefore what was important to her.

Micro level

The first level refers to those issues that seem to be most concerned with her internal emotions, individual responses and beliefs which motivated her to take action to participate in this role. Initially Kay was asked to stand as a governor by another parent governor which she found flattering:

I was very pleased that she, I suppose I wouldn't have, may not have thought of putting myself up for it. It was some sort of affirmation from someone else. I thought: 'I suppose, well yes I could, why not?' (KT1, p. 4).

This notion of affirmation recalls Honneth's concept of the most primitive form of recognition, that of basic self-confidence (1995, p. 129). Honneth's argument is that in order to have a sense of oneself as a person, an individual needs to have felt secure and loved in early life. A fellow parent's view that Kay should become a governor planted the seed of belief that she could take on such a role. This also raised an interesting point about perceptions of veracity. I had suggested to Kay well before this time that she should become a governor, a conversation about which she had obviously completely forgotten. This did not matter; any truths in the retelling of the narrative were hers to define and it was her version of the truth that I was to analyse from my research interviews.

Kay responded with alacrity to a suggestion about her being in a specific role:

*Yes, definitely. I've definitely got my governor hat on and I want to come across as serious and that I've earned my place to be there. I think that slightly the thing about being a parent governor, sometimes I feel that I'm perceived as, er, lightweight. Maybe that's just my own [laughs] shortcomings, inferiority complex, but I feel like I have, that's why I feel I have to be vocal, I have to say at least one or two, what I consider to be pertinent, things to put my, you know, because **I deserve to be there**. [My emphasis] (KT2, p. 38).*

This also raises the issue that narratives are not simply constructed histories but can reveal a struggle for voice, both in the telling of the story of the there and then and perhaps a deeper search for self in the re-telling in the here and now. A whole raft of responses showed Kay to be uncomfortable about her role as a governor. Some of these issues seemed to be located within her doubts about herself. This is a display of a seam of insecurity and lack of confidence in her own views and opinions. Right from the start of her experience as a school governor, she reflects that she felt unsure of what was expected of her:

. . . I didn't know until then, I didn't want to overstep the line . . . (KT1, p. 6).

I felt like maybe I was overstepping the mark (KT2, p. 12).

Choice of words are important signals in language. These metaphors seem to indicate a lack of confidence and a tentativeness in terms of taking the floor as a governor. Who is drawing the line she must not cross and over which mark had it been specified one should not step? Kay seemed to be perceiving a hostile environment full of hidden rules that she was in danger of transgressing, making for an uneasy emotional realm through which to navigate. Throughout the period of over a year that she was interviewed by me, she seemed to be unsure of her status and position vis-a-vis key figures at the school particularly in relation to the Head of the school and the Chair of governors. Gender could have been an issue, with a pervading sense of needing permission, seeking reassurance and a timidity due to the reception she had received about the psychosocial boundaries facing her. This did not bode well for a successful transition to a governor who felt respected and productive.

This in turn led to a hesitancy in her performance in her role as governor:

I don't want this to be a big crusade. It's trying to make some progress without putting backs up. In the first session I was asking quite a lot of questions and I thought maybe I need to keep my head down a bit more [laughs] (KT1, p. 18).

Although she laughed at this point, it was a nervous, self-deprecating laughter indicating the uncertainty she felt. It seemed a questioning answer, asking for reassurance.

She feels particularly aware of the lack of empathy from the Head:

...she didn't get angry with me because we were in a full governing body but I could see I'd really, - she was a bit peeved. I think I'm noted for, she's obviously marked me down as somebody who doesn't always ask the right questions I think (KT2, p. 6).

This assumption that the Head knows the “right” questions and even that there are certain correct questions at all, is a sign of the lack of confidence that Kay was feeling. Goffman’s work on presentation of the self, underlines the significance of the way we perceive others in terms of our actions and responses (Goffman, 1959, p. 18). Kay was seeing the Head as an authority figure and ascribing power and knowledge to her. She assumes that the Head is making judgements about her performance as a governor.

Her authority seems to be a problem in that she is not clear how far she can pursue issues.

This is the problem I've found, I'm still not clear how far I can go with raising . . . (KT2, p 13)

Being a governor has not established her any more firmly in the school. John still had very few friends to play with out of school – mainly due to the nature of his autism where he often plays alone and does not connect easily with others. Kay also talked about how attempts at making friends through other parents at the school had not been fruitful,

...it comes down to, I'm white, and not many other parents are, so I think they go to a couple of ... It's just I think most, the vast majority of the school, the children are [pause] ethnic minority and I think they bring their problems to someone more in touch, they would feel more in touch with their own community than mine, probably. ... so I actually don't see, we don't mix

socially with other, with very many other children. Or any at all really, it's not that kind of school

...

Well no, the class is the same thing I think because I am viewed [as] white, middle class, I think, I would think um, a lot of the parents wouldn't come to me about something. They're not supposed to anyway. I feel slightly separate from a lot of people, a lot of the other parents. The ones I see, they seem to know each other and I'm slightly removed from that I think. Probably not as a governor, ... I'm very friendly with one or two of them, but I noticed they know each other socially and they see each other socially which I don't. I've put out feelers, it doesn't seem to be taken up really. I know John wants to play with this one boy. I'm very friendly with his mother and give her lifts but whenever I mention it would be very nice if her son could come round for a play, it's not taken up. I don't think for any particular reason, maybe she's just, I don't know why she's but um, it doesn't happen. I don't think a lot of socialising goes on between various children much, ... (KT1, p. 31).

Kay was speaking sadly as she told of this difficulty of making friends with any other parents. John could not make friends for himself and she was unable to gain entry to any meaningful friendly relationships with other parents.

One significant story that she told was about being asked to deal with issues concerning staff, without support around the implications of being part of the resulting decisions. This added to the debit side of motivation and related to the responsibility for difficult internal matters. There can be approbation from staff if decisions taken by governors do not please them and this can be particularly pertinent for parent governors who are present at the school in-between governors' meetings,

There was a committee meeting actually, a parent accused them of discrimination a couple of times actually, which didn't go down terribly well. I don't care really (KT1, p. 26).

I missed picking up the comment: *I don't care really*. It was an odd thing to say as it indicated some personal emphasis. It arose again right at the end of the interview which underlined that it had importance for her,

*Because I'm a parent governor, I'm there afterwards. If somebody's been there working a long time, as this person has, for years, and we come to this decision obviously some members of staff will be relieved but then obviously she would have many friends there. I was thinking: **they're going to hate me now**. [My emphasis] (KT1, p. 28).*

I had not realised at the time quite how significant this had been and revisited it for the second interview (KT2, pp. 28-30). Kay had sat on a disciplinary panel in which the decision was taken to dismiss a member of staff. This felt like a threatening situation and was far away from the involvement in the school that she originally wanted. This issue of the responsibility of a governor being the face of school decisions is one I explored the second time we met. Being able to interview Kay again meant that I could seek to understand all these themes in more detail in the subsequent interview and track their relative significance to her over the 14 months of the research period,

And one of the people was reinstated, they appealed. That's why I said it was difficult for me afterwards, because the person was still in the school and really, for months and months and months, no eye contact at all. She was quite cheery and happy, acknowledging me, but she just, that, she ignored me for months and months and months [laughs] and ... we had to do what was best for the school and it was clearly put to us that we had to vote to really dismiss her. But anyway, an appeal was made by her union representative and she was reinstated. I had thought: It's fine for the other panel members because they don't have to see her [laughs] but I have to walk in every day and probably see her every day and she's probably going to think: 'There's that horrible governor who tried to get rid of me!'" [laughs]. Um anyway we're now on acknowledgement terms, we say "Hello", we do catch each other's eye, but for ages, I did feel uncomfortable for a long time. In hindsight it probably wasn't the best thing to have done actually. ... I think perhaps I was slightly annoyed, that I wasn't told that she had been reinstated because ... suddenly she was there in the autumn term back in school. As far as I knew she had been dismissed ... and it would have been nice to have been warned [laughs] of it really. ... Necessarily it has to happen that way. You can't separate the, who you are really and I'm sure that the staff member, is difficult for them to separate me being a parent from me the governor as well (KT2, p. 28).

The overall feeling coming from Kay was that of not being validated, heard or appreciated. This is not being recognised as Honneth describes it in the sense that she felt unprotected and abandoned by the group. Kay's feelings of the difficulty of being a governor at the school were becoming clear but it is impossible to say whether there were very complex psychological reasons operating here to do with a life history. Because of our prior relationship, I did explicitly compliment her on what she was trying to do and what she was offering the governing body.

I think you would be a great governor to have,

Huh! [snorts dismissively]

I do. I'd be so pleased you were there, bringing up these things (KT2, p. 20).

This was referred to again at the end of the interview:

Any final comment, any thoughts about any use to you? It's been very useful to me

Yes it has actually

In what way?

Because I was thinking, I was getting a little bit disgruntled [laughs] and actually being able to air my grievances, well, I think I can get past that. I think I can channel some of these ideas and raise them in a certain way that is not going to be perceived as a personally challenging. I think that's what I've got to, I'm always being a bit cagey, but speaking to you it seems that it's ... I feel like I've been validated a little bit in my opinions. I was beginning to think that I should just keep quiet about everything, but I don't think that's the point of a governor. really

No

Do you just go along and sit back in committee meetings, just sit there, don't say anything and, why go at all? (KT2, p. 46).

She made comments about feeling validated as a result of our discussions during these research interviews and seemed to be responding to the process of being heard, a common outcome of just being able to talk and being taken seriously and appreciated. I

explicitly highlighted the efforts she had made as it was clear to me that she was not being valued and I found this frustrating as she was someone I knew to have a lot to offer as a keen new governor. This clearly indicates the relevance of Honneth's ideas of respect and the recognition we seek from others, although in this case it was clearly not forthcoming from the governing body. Kay felt heard in our interviews and wanted to reassure that she was offering useful support to the school. This indicates that the research relationship was providing a form of recognition although this was in the context of the researcher being a friend of the interviewee. It seemed that Kay felt the interview was a place where being a governor could be thought about in a neutral way, thus providing a transitional space where she could reflect openly.

Meso level

The second level that was explored was the meso or middle level between the individual and the societal, representing the institution or group within society which has impact on the motivation of the participant and focuses on the effect of her relationship with the school or board of governors. One of Kay's clearly expressed motivations to become a governor in the first research interview was to help the school and this included playing a part in raising standards at the school to support the school to do well and better. The group dynamics, power play and interrelationships with school leaders, staff and fellow governors were tracked and identified as significant influences on her motivation.

By the time of the second interview it was obvious that this motivation had not been satisfied, or at least only in part in that she did raise issues but felt either she was not listened to or that no action had resulted. Kay talks about this as a 'grievance', a word which cropped up a few times. She felt the Head did not like her and that getting anything done was too difficult,

Some people do like that, some people do like to just sit around and chat without actually doing very much. I'd rather get in and discuss the points and raise the issues you want to raise rather than waffle and talk around it. I'm not retired, I want to get on and do other things. It's not a book club! (KT2, p. 41).

When she produced some research on behalf of governors it wasn't even read. There was a strong sense that she needed to be validated for her self-esteem and that her work and efforts be legitimised. Kay used the phrase, *a grievance*, and this was expressed a significant number of times, indicating a long and deeply-felt wrong. She felt the Head

Teacher did not like her and that getting anything done was too difficult (KT2, pp. 3, 4, 6, 12). Her feelings that the Head did not warm to her had dissipated this motivation through the stronger feeling that she was not truly wanted. She seems to be saying, how can we be helpful if we are not truly appreciated?

I have opinions yes, a lot of people don't, or it's an implied criticism whenever I say anything and usually it is, [laughs] because I'm trying to be challenging as I thought that was what you are supposed to do. And then the second time, ... I said, "I was wondering if there were any resources for dyslexia?" That I was quite surprised that there weren't any in a school for special needs, you know. . . . And I wasn't given any particular help really to help this child and [the Head] said: "So do you know anything about dyslexia, are you an expert at that?" And so I said: "Well no, I'm not", and she [laughs] basically she tried to put me down as somebody, she said: "Well there aren't any dyslexic children in the school" and I said: "Well I think this child, one of these children that I read with, could have a problem". She said: "So you know, you are familiar, you know all about this then do you?" So, I just think it's an odd thing, she gets very defensive and ... and that she can do no wrong because she is the Head, . . . And I just think you get a fair number of dyslexic kids in a normal school, I would have thought in a school for special needs, even though they don't have a diagnosis, I'm pretty sure a lot of them have that as an add-on and I think, just she because says we don't have any dyslexic children, I think that's a ridiculous thing to say and she should know better than that. ... and for her to, the Head Teacher, just to have slapped me down, just to make you feel bad really (KT2, p. 6).

The Head's responses to Kay here, as told by Kay, sounds extraordinarily aggressive. The Head is defending herself against what is perceived to be a critical attack from Kay. In terms of the way Kay felt about her personal relations with the Head, she felt strongly that she was not in favour with the school leadership however hard she tried to help, and her last sentence implies that there might almost be a deliberate intention to make her feel unwelcome. These comments reveal a quandry for Kay as she tries to work out how she should fit in. She seems to be asking, underneath her actual questions, how she should relate to the Head Teacher and how should she be treated by the Head Teacher in turn. She is puzzled at the unconscious level about why the relationships are not working out.

Kay's laughter during the interviews became more frequent when she was expressing a difficulty around being a governor or about a conflict with the Head Teacher. This seemed to be a defensive, self-mocking laugh to cover up and mitigate feelings of doubt, shame, almost perhaps to apologise for her stance,

It was the Head Teacher so, . . . I think I've been getting a little bit, I think she doesn't, er, I think she finds me a bit annoying [laughs] so I think that's another instance of a cooling relationship [laughs] (KT2, p. 4).

The dilemma of blending the parent /governor role could be the tip of this iceberg. Kay articulates not feeling comfortable or securely located in the role (Goffman, 1959).

Macro level

The third is that of the macro or societal level where Kay's motivation concerning her relationship to the wider community and her initial hopes for making a difference have been noted and discussed. The issue of motivation to take part in any activity as part of a life does relate to issues of identity i.e. the conception and expression of individuality, particularly around social or cultural roles; an area usually associated with social psychology. Putting oneself forward for a social or community role could be seen as a form of the identity commitment, leading to a sense of achievement. These motivators may lie below and perhaps underpin those stated reasons such as involvement with helping the school and raising its standards. Her authority seems to be a problem in that she is not clear how far she could pursue issues.

I'm not clear how far I can go, (KT2, p. 12).

Themes and issues that were taken forward included race and class. I asked Kay how she would describe her social class and if she thought there was any significance to this with regard to her motivation and engagement with the school. She described how many of the parents were from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. She had found it difficult to make new friends amongst the parents and wondered if this was because she was perceived as being white and middle class or whether the other parents knew each other from previous schools. I asked Kay how she would describe her social class and she said middle class. She said that most of the members of the governing body are middle class. She didn't mention it as a particularly significant matter with regard to her motivation and engagement with the school. Three of the 15 governors were ethnic minorities and they were all parent governors or staff (KT2, p. 44).

Kay had started out with high hopes as a governor and by the time of the second interview, seemed disillusioned, she seemed to be going off the idea of the difference she could hope to make in the role. Anxiety and the need for reassurance and support were spoken of indirectly. Her difficulties as outlined in the second interview had become more established and included being stopped from volunteering to do reading with pupils

Yes and volunteering reading has now been terminated [laughs]. I was the only one [laughs]. No reason why, it did not fit in with the curriculum, which is true, pulling the children out of the same lesson every week is not good as they're always missing the same thing, and they said they would introduce a new policy now that every child gets one-to-one reading once a week. I just wrote back and said: It's good to know that, I actually thought that's probably what you did do anyway". [Laughs]

...

Really surprised that they don't [laughs] so that's good news, so to their mind they don't need volunteer readers anymore. I should have raised this yesterday but I didn't want it to become a personal issue. Because it came up yesterday about the, it was looking back on the last meeting about literacy and she said, because the Chair said: "And so what about the volunteers?" "Well we don't do them, it's changed now because we do this". So I thought, I didn't want to raise the issue because I thought it was raising a personal interest but I wanted to say, I think you should still have volunteers if they're happy to come in because it just relieves the teachers you know they spend more time. Even though every child gets one-to-one once a week, some children maybe could get a bit more input if they need it, but you could leave the ones that are not specialist. It was a little veiled thing you know because, "these children they need more specialist input". I thought that's a little bit of a hidden barb to me [laughs] but I was really only trying to help (KT2, pp. 7, 8).

The relationship between the Head and Kay had deteriorated to such an extent that Kay now saw personal attacks in every disagreement. Kay had been asked to get quotes for acoustic panels which were then ignored, as a decision on this matter had already been taken,

It seems a lot longer than that [laughs]. I think probably because I belong to three committees and there are quite a lot of meetings, . . . So I think I might drop the resources one because I don't think I'm particularly useful. Actually I think it's very important although I did feel as though I wasn't particularly, I felt a little bit sidelined in that committee because I didn't have finance experience [laughs]. Although I did feel, I do run my own business, so you know, I do know how to balance books. Um, but I think it's because one thing came up and I said I would look into it, because one other, into the price of something, for acoustic tiles for the ceiling. . . . I said, "Well I'll have a quick [look]", and they said, "Well if you would, that would be lovely", so I did. And it wasn't going to be a big thing, I was just going to ring a couple of companies as comparative So anyway it came to the full governing body meeting after the resources [committee] a few weeks before the next resources committee, and they said, "Oh Chris had looked into this, she said various options, think we are going to try this one and we've looked into acoustic tiles and they turned out far too expensive", and I thought, "Hang on I haven't even reported back yet and they've already dismissed it", so when it came to the next one and I said so, and I was slightly annoyed really that I had actually put some work in and that wasn't even going to be considered and it was just dismissed straight away, straight out of hand, "Oh no its going to be too expensive", so anyway . . . I didn't actually put it into those terms, I just said: "Oh so you have already looked into it independently and you have decided?" and they said, "Yes it was too expensive". I should have said: "Thank you for letting me know, it would be nice if you had let me know, as it would have saved me some bother", [laughs] but they didn't of course (KT2, pp. 3, 4).

Kay identified what she should have said back to the Head in order to make clear that she was disgruntled about being overlooked, but she did not express this directly or assertively.

All schools are subjected to inspections by the government appointed inspectorate, Ofsted. These inspections are part of the wider social and political context where schools are expected to demonstrate that they reach specified standards for financial management, health and safety, governance, safeguarding and pupil achievement. Inspections occur with very little notice and these visits are inevitably stressful for all at the school because Ofsted judgements can have a big impact on the image of the school

in the local community and therefore on the viability of the school. Similarly, although less discussed, reputations of individual teachers and particularly of senior management can be on the line, with pointed comments being made by Ofsted at times, which can make or severely affect career development.

At the Ofsted inspection which resulted in a downward regrading for the school, Kay was irritated by the response of the Head which Kay felt to be 'flippant' (KT2, pp. 5, 6).

What gives you that impression or what have you picked up?

Er, the first one was after the Ofsted, we were re-Ofsted in February and we used to be an outstanding school and it's gone down to being a good school. ... Well they said it was all because the whole Ofsted framework has changed, the whole way it has been graded has changed, you now have to get above 80% outstanding, or 80% or above, where it used to be less than that. And they said because of the nature of our pupils, they don't understand, it was changed slightly for the special needs, anyway they said it was, they were trying to convince the, at a full governing body, she was giving a whole explanation about you know, giving ameliorating circumstances, because it was the change to the Ofsted and I think it used to be above 60% to be outstanding. To my mind that's not particularly outstanding is it anyway? 60% and she said. "It's because we have a lot of new staff you know who've got ..." At least 20% of our staff were new to the school, um they didn't have so much experience of SEN and I said this I think there were one, two mentions of outstanding teaching and I said, "I know it's very short notice that you get now for Ofsted, but is it not possible that you know, all the experienced teachers cannot pull out of the bag one outstanding lesson?" [Laughs] You know when you are in front of, and you know the Ofsted's coming, even with a day's notice? Dig deep!

And while a fifth of the staff may have been new, which is a high amount

Yes 80% are experienced! Anyway she was quite outraged at that suggestion

And responded how?

Oh she just, well: "Oh you can't", basically that. I didn't understand, and I know that pupils present problems every day, something could have happened, but I still maintained 80% are still very experienced staff and I think you usually

find, the 20%, the inexperienced staff are usually, the more, I think, are the more gung ho and er really try harder. Sometimes I think the experienced staff tend to sit back because it did say in the Ofsted report there was an overreliance on handing out, on giving out worksheets. And I thought, would you really hand out a worksheet when the Ofsted inspectors are in? You know, that's just, why would you? [laughs] You try your damndest to ... And with these kinds of pupils, all sorts of situations can arise, but I would have expected more than two teachers to show, being given outstanding grading. I'm glad there were two, but I did think, the whole point of, what was it she said? That's it, that's why I bought this up because it really put my back up, she said: "So really, all we have to do", after she'd gone through this whole explanation about how she had changed the school, "is spruce up our teaching and learning a little bit and that's what we need and we will be fine". And I thought, well, the whole point of the school is the teaching and learning, it's not a case of just sprucing it up, I thought that was such a flippant thing to say that it got my goat and that's why I said that remark and she didn't like that.

And who has opinions.

I have opinions yes, a lot of people don't, or it's an implied criticism whenever I say anything and usually it is, [laughs] because I'm trying to be challenging as I thought that was what you are supposed to do (KT2, p. 4).

Another issue was that of life skills teaching for the pupils and the question of the repeated low-level lessons.

Yes, exactly, things do take an awful lot of time, that's another one of my slight grievances, things just drag from meeting to meeting and nothing ever gets done. . . . So I brought up the thing saying: "I was wondering whether lifeskills might not be a good thing . . .?" I didn't say it in those terms, I said: "Is there an opportunity for teaching lifeskills in the later years, in year 10 and 11 to touch on that sort of thing they do at [borough] College?" Because I had noticed [laughs] in food tech they tended to do the same, repeat the same thing [laughs] [sighs] you know, well I see it as I'm a parent and I said you know . . .

. . . Yes, I did not know if this was my place to, that because that's a curriculum thing, I wanted to know if its constrained by national curriculum or if it's a

decision, a school thing. I didn't get very, I had . . . Yes well she was, this came up later on, she was a bit, I felt like maybe I was overstepping the mark. I didn't know whether the other governors were interested. Maybe they thought I was raising a personal grievance. . . . But I did think it was quite relevant as we are the achievement committee which is meant to deal with learning,

*. . . So I said after the meeting I had no, "I was not implying any criticism of Mrs Chambers, she's a very good teacher, I was trying to find out if it was a national curriculum thing or not", because the Head said twice you know, the curriculum is down to the school, she said twice, as if, you know: "butt out". [laughs] So I said, I just think she was saying: "Are you sure you're not confusing it with cookery club, because they do pizza because they've only got a short time to do it?" I said: "No it's the lesson", "It's probably cookery club", and I said: "No, because the homework came home about **pizza** [original emphasis]. I said we're in Year 10 [laughs] and he's been doing it a lot [laughs] and I know there's time", I said, "but there also lots of other things you could do, there's boiled egg; have boiled egg and soldiers; scramble an egg; beans on toast; make a cup of tea and a piece of toast, you could do that. All these things might help our children to some sort of independent living" (KT2: p. 12).*

Kay's frustration at being unable to effectively question the level of lessons being taught was clear and her voice rose in irritation as she re-told this story. She also expressed annoyance that no changes were being made, e.g. to incorporate more visits for the pupils. In a report to parents the school claimed credit for a visit that Kay herself had organised:

Yes, yes and one of the ones, one of the visits was something that I'd actually organised and paid for myself [laughs] so to take it as a credit to the school . . . (KT1, p. 17).

f) Peer review

Using the crystallisation approach described by Richardson (1997), I shared both transcripts of the interviews with Kay with one of my research peers called Heather (1997, p. 92). This crystallisation partner perceived diverse interviews to the ones I had heard and the participant she analysed appeared a different person to the Kay I knew so well. Heather, my peer reviewer, was an educationist from a science background who saw the issues from the point of view of the school. She felt that Kay was a person who

was unconfident in her own identity and who needed affirmation from others in order to feel valued. As such her volunteering appeared to be a mechanism for providing self-worth. To her, the language Kay used seemed to be emotional and negative, with a focus on what was not working rather than what was. Kay's initial interest in being a governor to help her son get the best from the school was an example of self-interest and this did not seem to provide satisfaction and indeed should not really be the role of the governor as far as Heather was concerned. It could be that the management of the school where Kay was a governor shared this moral judgement about Kay's motivation. Heather identified that Kay's language talked of separation and difference and expressed disappointment with the school.

Heather had reached a harsh view of Kay. My familiarity with Kay meant that I was used to her and her self-deprecating phrases and hesitation about putting herself forward. I knew her as a strong and stoical individual who had managed having a disabled son always with a positive attitude and no complaints. The comments of my peer seemed stark and unfair about Kay. This made me realise again that the subjective experience of the reader or viewer colours the tone and influences the assumptions made about the participant. I went back to the transcripts and re-evaluated what I was reading to properly consider Heather's analysis, aware of some role confusion between my friendship with Kay and my role as analyst of her interview material. I wondered if my prior knowledge of Kay had stopped me hearing her words and caused a myopia about the emotion behind them.

My conclusion was that being present in the interview itself and being able to pick up all the verbal and non-verbal information that was conveyed, gave me a fuller impression, not of such a negative experience for Kay as a governor, nor of such self-interested behaviour by her. Heather's view as an education insider though, gave a clear idea of the umbrage that could perhaps be taken by school managers at some of Kay's attempts to inhabit the role of a constructive governor. This is the purpose of crystallisation, to celebrate these multiple points of view as described by Ellingson (2009), building on Richardson's (1997) earlier work. Such awareness helps to give a spectrum of reactions to the printed word which can be helpful in providing a check on too great a certainty of the meaning behind those words. It demonstrates that there can be many truths in any one experience. This one view was the only one of my crystallisers who had a very different view of the interview transcript to my own.

g) Conclusion

Kay found the whole experience of being a governor frustrating through not being able to contribute more fully. This seemed a waste of her initial energy and motivation but I could also see that elements of her own manner and presentation could have provided an almost inevitable clash with the school headship team. Kay variously described the different problematic issues that she encountered as her 'grievances'. Her initial expectations had been high and she felt dismayed and confused by the resulting rebuttals. She seemed to be clashing with the Head resulting in a diminution of her initial hopes and motivation. One by one, over each aspect of the aims she set out with, she had been frustrated and knocked back or just stalled in her pursuit of them. A contributory factor could be that the start of her relationship with the school seemed to be one of wanting to find a satisfying role for herself, in that sense her expectations were high. This was coupled with a simplistic attitude to, and a direct delivery for conveying her concerns about issues at the school which alienated a defensive management. At a time of socio-political upheaval in education, perceived criticisms are unwelcome and it could be that the school felt that the constraints they worked under were not appreciated. This brings to mind Goffman's (1959) treatise about presentation being key in communication; which school would, after all, relish having a critic as a governor?

Kay's narratives were almost exclusively personally focused and she seemed to have an underlying desire to prove herself useful to the school. In terms of the three levels of involvement, this is focused on the micro level of the individual and the meso level of Kay's relationship with the institution of the school. Honneth (2001) summarizes Hegel's writing on recognition and it is clear that Kay's experience was very far from being able to deploy her talents for the universal good that Hegel described in the quest to become fully free as an individual (Honneth, 2001, p. 61).

Honneth's (2009) later re-appraisal of the influence of Freud reminds us of the latter's central argument about the crucial role of anxiety,

...we must hence succeed in accepting that anxiety as an integral component of our personality (2009, p. 145).

Kay seemed, perhaps as a result of early experiences and disappointments in later life, to feel that how to fit in as a governor is a struggle that has defeated her. Reflecting Honneth's (1995) earlier major work on the need for recognition for human flourishing,

Kay would agree that she experienced the struggle but it was ultimately unrewarded by any meaningful recognition. A summary of Honneth's (Ibid.) argument describes:

The possibility for sensing, interpreting, and realizing one's needs and desires as a fully autonomous and individuated person – in short, the very possibility of identity-formation – depends crucially on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three modes of relating practically to oneself can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively, through being granted recognition by others whom one also recognizes (Honneth, 1995, p. xi).

Perhaps articulating the difficulty of her time as a governor so clearly to me through our interviews made her more aware of these missed targets, but even before our second interview she was feeling down and troubled when we bumped in to each other locally. She groaned about how it was going and said she would tell me all about it when we next met. Talking it over with me gave her renewed motivation and topped her up to rejoin the fight. From Kay's point of view after the second interview, it was turning in to a wasted effort over four years. Her life with her son was frustrating and unrewarding enough, she did not need more of that in her voluntary work. Asking Kay about her feelings at the end of the interviews about her period of governorship, she summed it all up by saying it had been: *a frustrating experience*. What she had hoped, and tried, to do had not been appreciated and indeed any progress she tried to make had often been thwarted. When her time of office was over, she stepped down from the governors with alacrity and relief.

Working with Kay for my research threw up complex issues around interviewing an intimate other. These issues and my struggles with the ethical dilemmas they raised are explored fully in Chapter 8 and through them I learned that challenges of this nature need to be fully prepared for if interviewing close friends. More consideration of the issues before commencing the interviews would have been useful and this could then lead to a more expansive briefing with the participant about possible conflicts of interest and ethical issues. Those issues are not just around establishing a more realistic ethical clearance but also stretch through the whole research process, from what we know in advance of an interaction, through how we work together and influence each other, to how we deal with any conclusions that we might want to publish as a result. I would argue that the research belongs to the researcher but respecting the other when it is a

close associate and how to manage the tension between the two without compromising the outcomes of the research, represent major methodological and ethical questions which need to be explored more fully.

Knowing her personally apart from the research threw up a big dilemma in terms of my previous view of her colouring my reactions to her narrative. I had made the original suggestion that she stood as a governor and it was difficult to separate my thoughts and feelings from the ones she was expressing. She was annoyed and disappointed that she had not been more warmly received as someone with much to contribute. She expressed frustration with the leadership team at the school and with the other governors in the lack of cohesion and rigour in their approach. She never really gained purchase in terms of finding a place where her contribution was recognised and did not feel part of a team. Whilst too smug and sociable an atmosphere could preclude robust challenge and clear oversight, feeling included, recognised in Honneth's (1995) terms, leads to confidence and the authority to act.

Analysing Kay's words in terms of personal and institutional levels of motivation it can be seen that in her case the individual motivators were very connected to her relationship with the school. Trying to intervene on institutional issues led to her feeling personally rebuffed and unheard, and trying to articulate concerns around the education of her son resulted in clashes with the priorities of the school. Kay recognized the school as an institution with which she wanted to become involved, but this was not reciprocated. In Honneth's terms, the intersubjective recognition was totally lacking, leading to conflict (1995, p. 5). There were obviously some personal issues between Kay and the Head and at a time of Head Teachers being under increasing pressure, these could have been a reflection of the anxiety present in the teaching profession. This links the personal with the meso level of anxiety around the school and then to anxieties within the wider culture. The regret I felt in hearing Kay's story was in knowing that she would have been a loyal and enthusiastic raiser of standards if the match between her expectations and those of the school had been more congruent. It seems disappointment could have been avoided if either one or both of these had been explored before the relationship commenced.

Chapter 5: ALISON'S NARRATIVE

Chapter 5: Alison's narrative - "A safe pair of hands".

a) Introduction

This chapter tells Alison's story and throughout all schools, places and names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. A long-term governor, she had been involved with more than one school and had been honoured by the local authority for the great contribution that she had made. Her volunteering began when she had children when her strength of character meant that she wanted an outlet for her intellect and talents in addition to raising a young family. Governing took up many hours of her week and in this way it formed an ersatz career for her. Alison had useful skills and chaired her governing body and got a lot of satisfaction from the role. The motivations that she herself identified included: a sense of duty; a family background with a history of community endeavour and her available skills and talents.

In terms of theoretical explanations, Alison spoke at length about her strong family background, which was not without its emotional complexities. This seems to have provided the secure environment suggested by Honneth (1995) to be required for her great self-confidence. At the same time the examples of community engagement that ran through her family had established an expectation of voluntary involvement which Putnam's (2000) research identified in the USA in context with the wider social issues. Goffman (1959) seems to be relevant too as Alison talked of the different roles that she inhabited. She has had several significant roles on each of the school governing bodies that she has worked with and was well-respected. It also came to light that she had been honoured at national level for this gubernatorial work, signifying Honneth's (1995) third level of recognition, self-esteem. It seemed as though Alison personifies his three levels of human flourishing via this voluntary work to which she had chosen to devote herself.

To what extent these ideas can be helpful in illuminating her decrease in motivation over the period of her two research interviews is moot because by the time of the second interview there had been some unexpected changes which had just begun to emerge at the first interview. A year of personnel difficulties at the school meant that Alison had been under some stress to the extent that she felt sufficiently de-motivated to start thinking about relinquishing this role.

In terms of levels, the micro, meso and macro, Alison seems to straddle all three and this means that different authors are helpful in theorising her story. There are certain

aspects of Alison's motivation that are personal and at the micro level. These include her family background and history that have shaped her and her future of voluntary involvement, where the work of Honneth (1995) seems particularly apposite; having the time available and the income which freed her from the need to earn her own living; her career dissatisfaction, intellectual development and leadership ability coupled with her feminism and interests outside raising children and the home and her religious beliefs and her involvement with the local community. At one point she talked explicitly about performing in role as a governor which brings Goffman (1959) to mind with his focus on the different roles that we inhabit, changing from one to another depending on the job at hand and the audience awaiting us.

Some of the factors she talked about were related to the school or institution. She was asked by the Head Teacher to become a governor in the first place; she experienced the stress of being the Chair of governors when circumstances became difficult, and when we met she was planning her exit strategy. At this meso level we can see Honneth's (1995) ideas of recognition coming into play as Alison was well respected on the governing body. Her skills and talents as a Chair of governors meant that Head Teachers relied on her and the local authority made use of her as a problem-solver in the borough's schools.

Some elements of her involvement are at the societal level including her sense of duty to society and desire to make a difference to an unequal situation for children; to which her other community involvement and church activities testify. Putnam's (2000) writing about those who carry out more than one voluntary role appears to be applicable to this macro level.

b) Pen portrait

My first impressions and thoughts about Alison were noted after our first interview: that she appeared capable, bustling but contained, smart, very confident, authoritative and with a low toned voice. Her posture was poised, her actions deliberate, she seemed happy to participate in a familiar habitus (Bourdieu), experienced, knowledgeable, relaxed and attentive. She seemed used to talking up and taking the floor, exhibited much social capital, was happy to take control and also be an equal partner in this encounter. She listened, always had a response, made herself comfortable and was aged in her 50s. Alison appeared mainstream, with reference to Goffman's (1959) apparent persona, that which gives me my first impression. Eager? No, but ready for me, quickly

responsive, prepared, ready to start, ready for action, agentic, assertive, needing no introduction, getting it straight away, keen to participate actively,

Um, shall I start at the beginning of the governing bit? (AT1, p. 1).

Alison and I had not met previously and did not know each other before the interview. I was put in contact with her by the clerking service of the local authority when I asked them if they could think of governors who might be willing to be interviewed for my research. They said she was an excellent and long-serving governor who they thought would be happy to participate. She readily agreed saying that she would be interested in exploring her own motivation as it was something she had not considered hitherto.

Thank you for your invitation to help with your research. I'd be delighted to do so - it'll be an opportunity for me to really think about why I do what I do.

(Private email correspondence, 2012).

The process was smooth, she seemed at ease and confident that she could be helpful. She was slightly older than me but was quite similar in many respects. I got a definite story from Alison and the words poured from her with little prompting. She used the time well, telling a thorough and detailed narrative of her life and involvement in governing. She enjoyed talking to me about herself and telling her life story. I interviewed Alison at my house in the living room at the dining table. She was at my premises and was not nervous. She was looking forward to the interview the first time and was happy to return the second. Alison told me her story about being a governor from the time she first began and even before that. She traced back the influences that she thought were important to the decision to be a governor first and then described how her long experience of governing had evolved.

Alison was a governor of Kettleing School, a primary school in an inner city environment, located in the poorer end of the borough which was typified as a working class area. When she came to see me this was all I knew about her. I certainly hadn't realised that she had been awarded an MBE by the borough for her services as a school governor. It turned out she was married with three adult children and lived very near Kettleing School and her children had also attended the school.

Alison was a very ready talker, she seemed well prepared to share her story as though she had been reflecting on it before we met. My first reaction to hearing the recording of the interview was how little I said throughout the interview. Alison had a lot to say, the

finished transcripts of the interviews came to 58 typed pages. She detailed almost in a monologue how she came to be a school governor in the first place, covering her working history and career development, the fact that she had a history of wanting to contribute voluntarily to society and about how she felt lucky in her education and upbringing. It sounded as though this was a script that she was very familiar with and as she had been a governor for a long time and often worked with different schools and Head Teachers, it was probably a narrative she was used to sharing. She had constructed a narrative which made linear sense of the past.

After marriage post-university, as well as working full time in a logistics capacity, Alison felt that something was missing in her life. Loving both hearing people's stories and finding out about the identities of others, she trained as a counsellor to offer relationship counselling on a voluntary basis alongside her paid work, but then was uprooted by moving abroad with her husband with his job and ceased this voluntary activity. Interestingly, as the first interplay of past and present was revealed, Alison shared how her mother had considered doing the same voluntary work earlier but it had come to nothing. Coming back to the UK over five years later, after Alison and her husband had started a family, she felt isolated and had to start making friends all over again.

Alison registered her young children in the nursery of the local primary school in the inner city, as it was her neighbourhood school and she was anxious to put down roots in the community in which they were living. She was feeling the ties and stresses of looking after young children having had her third child, and feeling strongly that it was wasting her talents. She spoke frankly and with humour about the difference between her previous professional life and her domestic role,

. . . and of course with being at home you've always got that feeling about: "What am I doing with my brain here?" because I wanted to be at home with my children, but you've been trained, you've got all this experience, it happens with another bit of your brain than the bit that's looking after children, although actually I did find being intelligent, and I'm not being arrogant saying that, it's just a fact, that I did find myself thinking myself through how to deal with all the childhood dilemmas and um, [laughs] I remember the awfulness of bath time and my mother used to say, "Oh, I used to love bath time" and I thought, "Well I don't!". . . and I did find ways to cope with it

[parenting] to cope with the monotony, the sheer repetitiveness because how else are they going to learn their manners, only because you keep telling them that stuff and [saying]: “Do it nicely”, when you really want to kill them because they keep doing something wrong, . . . (AT1, p. 6).

Um, but at that time I was perfectly, my lack of experience I think was, I had all that confidence, “We’ll do it this way” and it worked. Um, so that’s kind of how I became it and then it just was part of what I did, it was part of my routine. And it was the bit, you know, the bit about using Mum’s intellect and thinking about things in a different way from where you are thinking about raising your children and all of that, raising yourself above all that farmyardy bit, well, small children are very farmyardy. Um and raising yourself above the negotiation about you know, “No, it’s bedtime” or “No, that’s too much TV or no, you’re not having another packet of crisps” and “Yes, you must try and eat these green things”, you know, all of that kind of debate that you have with children. I wanted to have a different level of debate (AT1, p. 8).

Alison’s frustration and boredom in the 1980s in relation to her domestic duties reflect the heartfelt cries of radical and feminist writers of the past such as Mary Woolstonecraft who railed against the limited horizons expected of women. Feminists since then have argued for women to claim full and equal rights in society and to be able to reach their full potential (Tomalin, 1974). Oakley (1984) described the same conflict that Alison was experiencing in forceful terms,

Male-dominated culture has designated as female all labours of emotional connectedness... The principal mode of developing this sensitivity in women is the gender-differentiated nuclear family. Women mother. Daughters are transformed into mothers. An autonomous sense of self ... does not need to develop. Women's sense of identity is thus dangerously bound up from early childhood with the identities of others. Not so for men, who as little boys look into their mothers' faces and see what they learn is not a reflection of their own ... So if it isn't in love that women are lost, it's in the family. The tension between the interests of the family and the interests of women as individuals has been rising for some two centuries. It is not possible for these interests to be reconciled (1984, p. 201).

Alison's narrative was not resentful or bitter, but she recognised the limitations of taking on the main child-rearing role in a family. A husband who earned a large salary meant a stay-at-home role was logical for her with young children, interrupting a previously successful career and resulting in frustration and serious mental underemployment. Even before having children she had enjoyed a volunteering as a relationship counsellor – a role of some responsibility, requiring extensive training and no inconsiderate commitment of regular time. Due to moving to the USA and her growing family, she dropped this role and so, on her return to the UK, there was a significant gap in her life,

Very much so yes, and I mean, of course I'm very privileged, he's got a job that means that I haven't had to go out and work for money. I know, I mean I do do the cooking and the shopping and the cleaning and the washing and all the rest of it but, um, you know that, but on the other hand we have nice holidays, we have a nice car to drive, those sorts of things that you know, that money can provide and I don't, we don't have, obviously he was made redundant twice, that wasn't much fun um, . . . but I know enough from the way my life has turned out that there's always something waiting round the corner that will pop up that will come my way (AT1, p. 25).

Two aspects of this excerpt are of note, the first is that although happy in her home life, Alison is perfectly clear that although she was not performing paid work or intellectually demanding work, she was working hard at keeping the house going with all the domestic duties which are involved, so she is clear that there is an equality of labour in the marriage. The second aspect is her last sentence where she talks about future opportunities that will come along. This echoes Krumboltz and Levin (2010) who, in writing about what can be perceived as luck or happenstance in career development make clear that one aspect of lucky chances is in spotting and taking advantage of opportunities. Alison here is describing her expectation of the development of her voluntary career in those terms.

Once linked to her children's school locally and helping out with reading duties there, she was quickly head-hunted by the Head Teacher and duly elected as a parent governor which helped her to get to know other local mothers. Putnam's (2000) research on the lessening of community engagement in the USA talks about the recruitment of volunteers often arising from personal contact. Alison avidly attended the available

training courses for governors and then after a year became the Chair of the governing body.

c) Duty

Alison had a deep-seated motivation to be paying back after a lucky and privileged middle class life. Her husband worked in a well-paid job so financially there was no need for her to earn money. He was happy with and supportive of her role as a governor. At the time of my interviews with Alison, she had brought up her children and was not in paid work so had free time to spend on being Chair of governors. Her previous voluntary role as a relationship counsellor had fostered the skills of listening, empathy, summarising and guiding, all of which had proved useful in her governing role. These skills coupled with her career knowledge and experience of project management and organisation were invaluable.

She referred to the way the governing role required a wide experience:

. . . it became, I became much more understanding of what was going on in school, it was beyond just being a parent, it became much more about understanding about staffing structures and understanding about how to improve the quality of teaching and how to improve the quality of educational experience for all the children and the difficulties and the experiences that the children and their families bring into school and how you try and accommodate that and how you try to accommodate the teaching, the teachers and the support staff and I began to have a much broader understanding of what running a school was all about, and of course, the governing thing which is taking the strategic view, being a critical friend, maintaining a balanced budget. And we went from there really, that kind of more mature feeling about being a Chair (AT1, p. 9).

And how in turn, the governing developed her life skills further in other areas of her life:

And again, the experiences all through your life help you out, so negotiating tricky things, I'd have learnt actually through my work as a governor, so I was able to negotiate with my family because we had to change the executorship of my father's will . . . So that was a tricky thing to do and we just, we did it

[laughs] *you know, but um, and so there was all, lots and lots and lots going on and the governing just carried on all through it (AT1. p. 10).*

From the volunteering being an extra activity in her life, it became a mainstay of that life which helped her to develop new and transferable skills. She was not doing the voluntary work to give her career advantage, rather as an end in itself,

. . .although I do use this as my intellectual growth thing, um, I, it's not actually what I'm looking for, you know, to me why I do it is partly that, and that's certainly how I initially started, but it is, I have this strong commitment to the community that I live in (AT1, p. 20).

It forms a large part of her identity.

Alison found participating in the research interviews useful. Being a governor provides her with a role that she can ascribe to herself, a work identity. We are judged by the way we look and she dresses in the clothing of a business-woman. In this extract Alison is relating the different roles that she inhabits as Goffman (1959) describes it,

OK. Well that was very interesting.

What has interested you about it?

Well just reflecting on the past and realising that how much being a governor is part of the fabric of my life

Identity

Oh yes, very much so, oh the other thing I wanted to say, was that it is part of my identity and it is the bit that I think I, to be honest is, and I think I made this point earlier, is that it provides me with an outlet that pure domestic life didn't, wouldn't, couldn't um and that obviously since, I'm not doing the hands-on small children stuff, but still very much involved with my adult children's lives because they're still here, in a way that my parents wouldn't have been involved in my life. It does provide my identity because . . . you've got other things to say but you know, people say: "What's your occupation?" And I struggle with it, you know, "What do you do?", and I just find it so much easier: "Well I'm a school governor", because if people aren't, then they wouldn't necessarily know that it is just a little volunteer job but, except of course that it's a bit more than that for me. Because do you say, "I'm a housewife", because it's not ...

'A homemaker', they'd say in the States

A homemaker they would say in the States, yes well I got used to that because in a way it is what I do um, but people dismiss in this country because it's that American phrase

Yes it's status, it's got, it is in a leadership, as in leadership of the school, role I mean, doubly so as Chair but it's got lots of connotations

Yes and people are surprised if they realise that actually I am a housewife [laughs] because I don't seem like one. I think, I don't know, is it because I haven't got my Marigolds [rubber gloves for washing up] on? I don't know

I think dress and bearing have a lot to do with it don't they, appearance, our costume you know, are you a governor in costume, are you a homemaker in costume?

Yes! I've got my clothes that, you know, trousers that have to be dry cleaned

Work clothes

Yes [laughs] my bag with my file in [lifts up her work bag]. I thought why are you bringing that with you Alison? I thought to myself - because I never go to a meeting about governing without a file or two and I did think I might want something to refer to so

Yes it's a prop almost isn't it, for the role?

Yes definitely, definitely (AT1, p. 29).

d) Family background

Volunteering featured prominently in her family background, her mother did parish voluntary work and her father was active in his professional association. Alison's involvement came through her children at their nursery/primary school originally,

Um, but also I think perhaps the example had been set as I say, by my mother who had always been, you know, interested in the community and doing things with the community. Hers took a slightly different route but that, but it was always part of my life, what I thought was normal if you like (AT1, p. 4).

One of the first issues she talked about was that her mother had inhabited some of the same voluntary roles as herself, being a marriage guidance counsellor and doing general

voluntary work. Alison grew up thinking such voluntary commitment was 'normal' and so it would have been odd if this had not shown up in her own life at some point.

Alison's telling of her family background revealed a complex relationship with her father, with whom she was not close as a young child but was nonetheless relied upon to be his carer in his old age. The family background was obviously significant in terms of role models who were volunteering either in the community or professionally and an emotional background that was layered and she had a large family dynamic in which she was immersed. During the course of our interview she explained that two of her sisters were also school governors where they live,

Um and she, my other two sisters who are 10 and 12 years younger than I am, we're much more out of the same mould, different obviously but we're more in the same mould and um yes, we're both being school governors, they are currently governors of their schools and then they joke and say well of course I am, we are just following in your footsteps. And they are hugely supportive and are very of me and very full of admiration for me which in lots of ways I feel I don't really deserve, but you know . . . in their eyes I can do no wrong, I sometimes think and I'm constantly saying no I, that's not the case but of course in the matriarchy, I am the matriarch of the family now so that's how it is, there you go, [I must] live with it (AT1, p. 23).

Her sisters respected her voluntary role. It also emerged that one of her daughters had joined the Parish Council where Alison also gave voluntary time as Chair of the parochial church council (the organising committee of the local parish).

And you were saying you thought that had roots in your upbringing

Yes yes um, because my mother was involved with voluntary work as I say, differently and she was um actually she would have been on the Parish Community Council but that was you see because I left when I was 18 to go to college and then my youngest sister was 6 so you know there was a whole lot more mothering that she was doing

I am very happy to do what I do for the people of [the borough]. . . and that's what I think I should be doing and I'm a very privileged person, you know I've had all this education when it was relatively unusual for women to have the education and the work experience and you know, I've lived abroad. I've had my own trials though they are nothing that associated with some of the trials of

some of the children who come through our schools have had, but you think you know, one's been tested so you know, I know that I can, I can stand at the head of an organisation and take the brickbats. I know I can do that and I don't mind doing that because I think, you know, there have to be people who will do, you know, our society will fall apart if there weren't people who did voluntary work and it has always been the case, it was ever thus I think (AT1, p. 16).

I just think that you know, these things, they mean well, but they don't understand how to relate to people and I, I think that is key to life really, how you relate to people, but I would, wouldn't I? [Laughs] With all my background and life experience. Um, so that's where I am now, Chair of governors at Kettling and we are having one of our little challenges at the moment as the Head Teacher is not well and how you negotiate that with getting her back to work and being discreet about the nature of the illness and challenging people and it's all, that's the way it is (AT1, p. 17).

She talks about the circumstantial contributory aspects, that she is married to a partner who funds her voluntary work and without whom she would have had to work for a salary. He is also supportive of her work as a governor. It gives her a work role too.

Well you see, I've always had this wonderful family um, and I do, I do have it in my head of course but there's always something else to think about when I get home actually um, there's been a child who was very unimpressed about mummy being, "at another meeting" so that's what I do, I take that hat off and I become, you know, "that inadequate mother", as my youngest daughter, my youngest daughter really used to put me through it, the other two um and they were, this is it, isn't it, as a mother, you never, you think you know it all then the third comes along who is so different [laughs] . . .

So it doesn't cause you stress or not that's not manageable anyway?

Um, sometimes it does. I worry, I do worry, of course I worry. I worry more about Kettling than any of the others because I suppose, as I said earlier, it's in my bones because it's where my children went and it's so much part of my community because I am involved in the community (AT1, p. 18).

And presumably your upbringing has also given you this, this robust, the ability to withstand things that other people would be rushing home sobbing over, you know a row at the meeting or ... criticism of their role or ..

Yes, I am sensitive to it and I, I also would never think that I was necessarily particularly good, I think a lot of it is, and I said to them when they asked me to be the Chair, I said well look, all I can promise you is I'll be a safe pair of hands, and that's how I think of myself. I don't have any illusions, I don't think of myself as being charismatic leader or anything. I don't think of myself as being particularly articulate, particularly as I'm getting older . . . And so many people are much more gifted at thinking on their feet than I am, but I think, but I do recognise, you know, I am a safe pair of hands, I'm calm, I'm pleasant and those are qualities of value but there are other qualities out there that may suit different styles of leadership. I wouldn't say I was innovative, I didn't necessarily take particularly creative, and but I think you know, I'm not business-oriented, I mean I know about balancing the books um (AT1, p. 24).

e) Feminism

Alison talked about needing something more,

but there was something missing so I, to cut a long story short I eventually I went through the process, . . . So there I was, you know, doing my full time job, and doing this voluntary work, so it's been, part of my, sort of my adult life, voluntary work (AT1, p. 4).

I did, was using my brain but not in the same one as I had done through my training and my work experience. So when I saw this thing, I thought, "Oh, I could do that." That's something I could do (AT1, p. 7).

So that's how I became established and it just became part of the fabric of my life really . . . I was always sort of making nice little cakes and taking another nice thing for [her children] to eat and making sure there was something for them to do, so it was very much, there was a price to be paid for my intellectual activities and I, you know, it just went from there really (AT1, p. 8).

Despite wanting this extra role in her life, it took Alison some time to fully inhabit this role,

But it took a while and even then, it was '98 the current Head started and that was really my coming of age as a Chair because up till then I'd had to do that pinching thing, "Am I really doing this?" You know, "Am I really Chair of governors at the school?" It didn't quite sit with my image of who I was (AT1, p. 9).

f) Being needed

so I'd done, was doing the volunteer reading in my children's class at that time and then, shortly after that, because I went to one of those parent-teacher conferences and towards the end of it, the Head Teacher came in and said: "Have you spoken to her about it?" and the class teacher said: "No, no yet." What are we talking about? And they wanted: would I consider being a parent governor? (AT1, p. 7).

And it sounded like a terrifically responsible role which a sensible, established person would have and I'd never kind of thought of myself as one of the grown-ups I suppose. I thought this was definitely a grown-up thing even though I was 40 I suppose by then. I would have been, yes, and you would clearly think you would have been grown up but I was still waiting to be one anyway, and it was only once the Head, that we had been through the selection process was and knowing when you get there which the right one was, which person was the right person to recruit and then it was only then I think that I began to feel that you know, this wasn't going to be something that someone was going to come and tap me on the shoulder and say: "OK you can go back and play now." You know, "Leave it to the grown-ups." Oh yes, I really am the one doing this (AT1, p. 9).

Despite her confident exterior, Alison here reveals that she had periods of wondering if she was up to the job and if she was properly inhabiting the role. She took on, in addition, a role in a school with particular difficulties,

That left a vacancy as Chair and they asked me to do it. I said: "No don't be silly, I'm not doing that, I've got far too much to do, so I'm not doing that", but they kept coming, they kept asking me and I just thought well actually it's this thing about you've got the experience and you look round and you think well who the heck else is going to do it and actually I don't think I've got a choice, I have to do it, and I did do it um, and that really was very challenging because

there would be lots of people who would pop up from various government departments asking very aggressive questions at governing body meetings and you've got the Heads who I really felt were doing their best in very difficult circumstances in challenge to that, the way you know, the rhetoric from the government now is and Ofsted and [current chief inspector of schools] and [current education secretary], well that kind of rhetoric was present in the room and it's not easy to live with and it's hard and then of course coming at it the other way there were all these children from um, desperate backgrounds and so many of them just unable to cope with the school system. I think I sat on something like 9 exclusion panels in a matter of 18 months, which is grim and um, in fact one of the people which will be on my conscience for ever, one of the people we excluded did go on to [commit a very serious crime]. And you can't help thinking, was that as a consequence of being excluded from school? I mean I know people have to say it was his responsibility what he did and I know that and but I still, you know, I still think, I do wonder. He couldn't stay in school he was disrupting the education of too many other people, so you know, it's a hard, there were some very difficult things that we did, but the good news was that eventually we did get it off special measures which was fantastic, that in fact all the exclusions that we made were all upheld you know, none of them in none of them we had to renege on. A lot of them went to appeal panels and that's another nightmare you know because a lot of people opposing the exclusion were horrible, they would say horrid things. I would think, "No actually, no, that's not what's meant by that", then people are not honourable sometimes and um [laughs] (AT1, p. 11).

This experience brought Alison more into contact with the exterior educational environment with its Ofsted framework for standards which can be quite rigid and demanding for failing schools.

and it's going well and I think, you know, the outcome for the children, it was clearly getting better while, you know, in the two years that it was in special measures and it came out of special measures and I think there honestly would be a bit of a blip when it was first taken over but it's, we have, things are getting better, so you do feel, well actually I played a part in a job well done there. And to be absolutely sweet of them, the local authority put my name forward to get an MBE, which I got so, which was lovely, so that was a whole

sort of experience which I never thought for a moment in my lifetime that, you know, that I would experience. And you know it just is a fantastic experience and I was very grateful, I didn't think that people like me got things like that, so it was lovely because you only get all the paperwork and you read the citation and you read why people gave me the MBE and the official line is, it is for "people who have made a difference in their communities", but here's the sting, "and continue to do so"

Ah

[Laughs] *It means I've got to do this forever! Not that I actually intended to give up there and then at all* (AT1, p. 12).

Being awarded an MBE for her work as a governor was a reward for Alison. It tallies with Honneth's (1995) third level of recognition, that of explicit appreciation by others whom one also recognises as contributors. This for Honneth is the highest level of being recognised by others for your agentic contribution to the wider group. It represents the growth of the self-confident individual who has joined with others to act with, through and for others and has in turn been recognised for this, enabling self-respect. This formal acknowledgement represents self-esteem to be felt in reaction to being overtly lauded in this way. But voluntary endeavour cannot go on forever and at the end of the first research interview Alison was beginning to see the end of the commitment,

Um and um, do I see an end game? I'm not sure, I did um, I sort of, the Head Teacher of Kettling, . . . we've got a kind of pact which is I'll be her Chair as long as she's Head and she's doing very well, she's Head of an outstanding school, we're setting in place shadow structure. In 5 years' time I could see she'll no longer be Head there and I think that's when I will go too because I don't think um, you know, a new Head, well, you know, hopefully if we get this right the new Head will be sort of home-grown because the school will still be so good that it won't need somebody to come in with a new broom to sweep clean, which is what this Head had to do and of course there are schools where that still needs doing but hopefully we'll set it up so that it can be a smooth succession and I can bow out. Because you know, there's plenty of other things to do and my husband will be retired I think [laughs] by then (AT1, p. 25).

But it is relevant because it is just, I am aware that I might sound somewhat disingenuous to say that these things happen to me I think but part of it is, there

is a quality that I have, I'm trying to be honest here without being show-offy, there is obviously a quality that I have that people feel safe with,

Yes

So that, they feel it's that I'm somebody who can hold things

Calmly, yes

Yes, [Laughs] So that's how I get asked to do things and I can do and I suppose partly, you know, I have the personality, the skills to be able to do it and I also course I do have my faith which does support me um, so that's how I survive and as I say, it's the distraction as well, there's always something else

g) Resilience

In the first interview Alison had been confident that any stress she suffered was managed by being active on a lot of different voluntary fronts, several schools, PCC etc and she had her family to distract and ground her. The year in-between our two interviews had obviously been different.

Um well in the last year I've had a number of experiences which have made me think about governing and realising that actually it can be incredibly stressful. I know the Head at the school where I'm Chair of governors,

Of course it is yes, yes, yes

Has [been very unwell]

You told me last time she'd been ill, in hospital

Yes and um anyway er the rest of the year was very iffy

Mmm

And the . . . Assistant Head was having to take on more and more of this and we made her up to acting Deputy Head and then appointed her . . . to be actually Deputy Head so which actually was a big relief because it means that legally they can take responsibility for the school which an Assistant Head can't. They can do if the Head Teacher says so, but given the circumstances I was much more comfortable like that, but of course what I was doing was actually papering over the cracks a lot because it really wouldn't have been

helpful for everybody to know the state of our Head's health. In fact I didn't really know, it was very much you know, day by day or week by week and um it was difficult and I just would wake up every morning with that awful feeling of dread in my stomach. (AT2, p. 1).

There had been a string of bad practice in contracts for contracting and cleaning.

So there's been lots of stress associated with that job um and um and then you know the bits that people talk to me you know I'm involved with [the borough] Governors Association so you hear a lot of stuff going on and I found that, I think the current government and the attitudes of both the chief inspector (Ofsted) . . . and the secretary of state . . . it's ruffling, it's upsetting the whole concept I think of local authority education services and all the people who work in it and I think it's been more and more aware of the kind of battle lines being drawn and (the secretary of state) seems to be terribly confrontational. And you see some think, I mean I do agree there's been too much and I'm banging on about it myself about something else which is that there's there has been too much indifferent performance, there have been too many people just getting pay rises automatically every year and not really any examination of 'What are you doing for that?', because in the private sector people don't get pay rises every year (AT2, p.5).

Alison was clear that it was important to keep staff feeling valued and appreciated whilst at the same time, making sure that there was value in the way that public money was being spent. The wider cultural and political milieu is significant as it adds to the pressures of good management of the school in her eyes.

She shows her resilience by being able to compartmentalise when things get stressful. With all of her adult children living at home, there is less space for her.

Yes and just to do the things I have to do but in my own time um and, and keep, keeping grounded so I have felt more stressed definitely and although I'm very blessed and I'm very grounded, I've much more, much more hard work this year (AT2, p.7).

so there is there is a sort of kind of light at the end of the tunnel personally where I think there'll be more space for me and so I can hang on in there until that point (AT2, p. 8).

and it's all very sad and difficult um so there's a lot going on in the family as well as um going in the outside world. I wonder if it's just in the ether

Yes that's right the dominos coming, falling down in line and how have you, what does that mean in terms of your motivation? Obviously we kind of make these calculations between plusses and minuses don't we? How does that feel for you?

Well I have to be honest and most recently I have been thinking more wait a minute I'm going to be 61 next birthday in a couple of months' time. (AT2, p. 9).

So although I toy with the idea and I always said sort of half-jokingly, but she does mention it from time to time, this Head, my one I've gone through the mill with, is that you know I'd be her Chair until she retires so . . .

So perhaps you're starting to think about an exit strategy

Yes I think so and I feel sure it's better to think about it rather than to have it thrust upon you . . . it would be interesting to see um how, how my life turns out, I might not be so tired (AT2, p. 10).

one of the issues that a school like Kettling is, it's 80% black of one description or another, mostly West African and getting those people to come forward to the governing body is quite difficult and the other thing is that really you want, one wants to be colour blind one wants to have people just because they're good as what they can do and they'll be good at it, in the way that's best for all of the school, not just good for the little, the tiny minority um so you know and we have always encouraged everybody to apply um but people often don't feel able to do it or they do sign up to do it and then just don't turn up and what I've got, I have a strategy now when I know who those people are likely to be and I make sure that it's not just they get the official communications, they get an email from me that: 'Oh, looking forward to seeing you, just to remind you', and a text about two days before and if that doesn't get them there then I think: 'Well I don't think you're really made up for this'. So I do my best, because the other thing is that I will not, be too overly supportive and say: 'Oh it doesn't matter if you didn't notice there was a meeting'. When they've had that amount of stuff, people come on, you're an adult you took this thing on as a volunteer because you wanted to play a role in the school, if you can't pay attention then,

especially given the amount of support you get then you know, sorry, maybe you shouldn't be doing it. So it thing there have to be limits to what you can do, I think there's a lot of talk about: 'Oh you've got to be very supportive and I am up to a point and I will not, I will tell people to go on the training, you don't have to pay for it (AT2, p. 11).

h) Community

Yes just looking at other things you mentioned last time well yes I suppose, you talked about the challenge was interesting, we've talked about perhaps when the challenges a bit get too much that what can be a motivator, can also be a demotivator, can't it?

Yes if it gets too much or if it gets too time consuming as well, you feel: 'Oh hang on there's not enough of me left over', and frequently with the rhythm of school life you get to the end of term thinking: 'Ahhh heavens, I've got two weeks and I don't want to think about this', or you are thinking about it but it's not right up here with, you know, it goes away somewhere and just settles a bit and you can regroup and similarly half term now and you think 'thank heavens'

A week off, almost. Yeah, making a difference, that was one of your motivators, are you still feeling that?

Yes definitely and you know an insistence on doing the best you can, delivering the best because that's the only thing that is going to make a difference for the next generation of children, whatever their social circumstances. It's the education that they get, because for many children, particularly ones new to this country, or families in deep, deep poverty (AT2, p. 13).

Alison shared with me that she was now involved with another community venture,

so in fact I have, so that's a sort of, kind of community thing that, there are other bits and pieces that go on with neighbours and things that just make you feel part of the community, which is interesting because it's not supposed to be a community in the inner city is it? It's supposed to be everybody not knowing each other and the rest of it but actually you do, but it just builds up over time. And some people come and go, that's the way it is but people who have lived there for a bit

And because you are involved with the church as well you have got lots of different connections with people haven't you?

And certainly twenty years ago I wouldn't have had because I was doing my life a different way at that time, well thirty years ago when we first moved there, but when you've been somewhere for a while, you do if you're a human being, you do kind of pick up those connections (AT2, p. 16).

Respect for school staff is an important issue for Alison. She was of the firm opinion that respect is a mutually given and earned attitude,

And just as you would, as a lawyer, you would respect a medical profession then you must have the same respect for a school. Because a lot of the publicity, a lot of the rhetoric around being a governor, 'Oh you can really make a difference, you know you make a difference and it's wonderful and it's great'. And so they go steaming in with, thinking that, which is true but they forget, that wearing their professional hat, that's not what they'd appreciate if somebody came into their environment and said: 'Oh why don't you do it this way', and not meaning to be critical of people but just interested, 'Well why don't you do it that way?' And um so it it's two bits, one is not really appreciating, not thinking about what it feels like from somebody from outside comes and says, 'Why are doing it that way?' And the other thing, you know so it's that kind of, how you manage yourself, so you've got to have respect for the environment um and the other thing is, and schools are so defensive and they have, I've said to you about [Ofsted and government initiatives] and I think they're becoming more so (AT2, p. 17).

I must admit I thought that about your background because it seems to me that you're very unusual, on the one hand the leadership side where you're articulate and comfortable but also on the counselling side where you've had a history of understanding about the need for empathy and rapport and congruence and all of those things.

Yes. I think without a doubt that's a real benefit and it's also other things that you know, it's again this business about the way reading has helped, all those funny things like 'a soft glance turneth away wrath' and all that stuff that I kind of picked up and we were taught kind of in a way, these funny old phrases, but there is so much to be said for that you know those kinds of things about

thinking before you speak, and 'a soft answer turneth away wrath' and 'you reap what you sow'

'Do as you would be done by'

'Do as you would be ...', absolutely. Biggest one of them all I think, and these things and these old-fashioned phrases which were part of our way of life, which don't seem to be there anymore. And I think that you know they've really got to think about things but I think it is very, and it can be very disheartening I'm sure for governors because they go in there thinking: 'Oh, I'm going to do this and it's going to be wonderful', and they and they mean so well, but by being but they're being tactless sometime and I'm not saying that's her issue (AT2, p.18).

Yes well and I do I mean, strands that I've mentioned today, is I am concerned about government rhetoric and Ofsted rhetoric and the damage that I think it could do, which is not to say that standards shouldn't be raised, because they should

No I quite understand the difference between the principle and how you enact it

And I you know in my own school and I am concerned about people on stonking great salaries who I don't think are doing value for money and I'm very, I think we should be tackling it. So that's my sort of issue, because the last thing I want is for the school not to live up to its own rhetoric of being an outstanding school and delivering to these children the best possible educational outcomes.

Because people are being too complacent I think it's a bit of dichotomy isn't it really, a bit of a problem? And I and then the other thing is the whole new cohort of governors who are coming in from outside professions, wanting to be helpful and you know tripping up over themselves and not, as I was saying, it's a different profession you should treat it with the same respect you would treat your own profession.

Perhaps we need to articulate a bit more what the ethos is to new people and that sort of and actually be more explicit about sensitivities and so on

And also actually governors have a corporate responsibility as a governing body, actually individually, we have no power, apart from the Chair of

governors who can act, but always has to refer it back to the governing body, she says pompously but that is the law I understand (AT2, p. 19).

Deep calling also an appreciation of the fact that you have gifts, you must use them. You know don't waste your life, because, be careful what you wish for. I had the experience, I probably mentioned this, when we went to live in the States suddenly not having all the responsibility I had and I just felt I don't know what to do with myself, absolutely worthless until I'd kind of rebuilt, built another life so

So it's about recognition in a way isn't it, a new community

Yes it's about knowing what you need and knowing that actually this position, doing this gives me something that I need, as well as I give it, and it, but I, everybody can see what I give, they can't necessarily see what I receive from that

And it is that status with a small 's' if you like, it's a role

It's a role and it's giving you your place where you fit, giving um, your children see it, your husband sees it, your friends, family, people around you see it, it gives you that

And the school and the staff

Yes. So I would never say I do this for altruistic reasons, yes there's a little bit of it but I am very aware of how much I get from it. The affirmation I suppose (AT2, p. 20).

i) Conclusion

Alison was a very confident person with social poise. The exploiting of her class capital and previous experience enabled her to enter the habitus of the social milieu of the governing body with ease and meant that she was very at home and productive in a bureaucratic environment (Bourdieu, 1988). Her training in interviewing and counselling from her earlier voluntary work meant that she could operate as a mentor and coach and her experience in governing in many schools enabled her to be a competent leader when necessary. She presented me with a huge amount of material from her two interviews and was obviously an analytical person who had spent time thinking through her influences before we met. She seemed to sum up the concept of

self-confidence to which Honneth (1995) referred in his first level of having a loving childhood, then Alison seems to personify that kind of background.

However the story of her childhood told of struggles with her father who had been affected by his own upbringing and his wartime experiences which Alison felt had the effect of making him awkward to relate to. She felt him to be an overly critical parent who was unable to be very loving. In his old age she was his carer and he was calling for her to be present so they were never estranged but she was astonished that in ill health and at the end of his life he wanted her to be near him.

A happy and secure marriage and small children gave her the opportunity to volunteer at the school which led to the invitation to be a governor. She knew herself and her strengths and as a school helper who had offered to help with the school's annual report to parents, her abilities were evident to the Head who recruited her. Her volunteering had taken the place of paid work and it allowed her to use her skills and to be recognised for her contribution. This fulfilled Honneth's (1995) second level of recognition, that of gaining self-respect from the school, in fact many schools, for her work. The local authority drew on her experience more and more during her time as a governor, first using her to help nearby schools in crisis, to sit on panels for exclusions and for occasional mentoring of newer chairs of governing bodies. She was active in the local association for governors across the authority as well as having a multitude of volunteering roles in the local community. Being on the Parish Council as an active member of her church community and also active in local environmental campaigns reinforce Putnam's (2000) findings who talked of the pull of greater community immersion for those who were already engaged,

... by far the most consistent predictor of giving time and money is involvement in community life (2000, p. 119).

Alison fits almost all of Putnam's factors for a high degree of community activity, she was the child of parents of the long generation who had lived through the Second World War and who were active in the community themselves, was well educated as a graduate, had children, was middle class and attached to the local community. She also endorsed Honneth's third level of self-esteem through being formally recognised for her contribution as a result of the award of an MBE medal, representing the highest level of recognition for an individual.

Chapter 6: THOMAS' NARRATIVE

Chapter 6: Thomas' narrative – “A reasonable type”.

a) The prologue

Scene One

1997, a church hall built around 1920, dark wooden walls, with 100 people present. It is the setting for a remarkable and radical gathering. It is the first meeting to launch a campaign to set up a new secondary school on the site of a closed failed school. The audience is a campaigner's dream of a mixture of those present and future parents who would not be able to afford the fees, and those who object to the very concept, with regard to private schooling.

Thomas is about 40 and he is one of four people on the panel at the front speaking to the meeting about the need in the area for a new comprehensive, co-educational secondary school with a sixth form. The other speakers are three women. Rebecca arrives late and stands at the back of the audience and listens intently to the progress of the debate at the meeting, she does not speak but is smiling broadly and nodding at what she hears and applauds enthusiastically at the end of the presentations.

Scene Two

Ten years later. A meeting room in a secondary school, 25 people present. The Head and governors of the same secondary school that the earlier campaign meeting called for, are hosting a 'get to know you' meeting with governors from a local 'feeder' primary school. Thomas is standing alone and a little apart, leaning casually against a wall, looking on at the wider group, and drinking a cup of tea from a cup and saucer. Rebecca enters the room, says hello to a couple of people she knows, then, as she looks around the room, notices Thomas. She wants to speak to him in particular. It is not because she remembers his attendance and role at the previous meeting. She does not, and she can hardly even remember that she attended that meeting in the church hall. She has not seen Thomas for the last ten years and cannot recall who the speakers were at the meeting in scene one. Is it the rescuer in her that makes her want to talk to him because he is standing alone and very much on the edge of the wider group? Or is it because he is from an ethnic minority and she is worried he is not integrated into the rest of the group? Or perhaps because she likes to take the initiative in starting conversations? She walks across the room and edges around the table to join him.

R: Hello.

T: Hello there

R: Is it OK to come and talk to you?

T: Of course, you are welcome to.

R: This gathering's a good idea, to get our boards of governors together.

T: Yes, a lot of our pupils come from the primary school where you're a governor so it makes sense for us to get to know each other.

R: My children go to this secondary school, I love it.

T: I was actually part of the campaign to get this school started, years ago, you know?

R: [With enthusiasm] Were you? So was I – well, I only played a small part supporting what was going on. I'd just moved here and couldn't believe that there was no good state school in this area. I didn't have children then, I hadn't even thought about it, I just wanted to support there being a good school round here. When I found out about the campaign I joined in as soon as I could.

T: And now look at us, ten years on! We started it from nothing and now it is an outstanding school!

R: I know, it's fantastic. And now my children go here. Well done you. I thank you!
[She makes an elaborate bow to him. They both laugh.]

Scene Three

Some years later. It is 10am in the living room in Rebecca's house where she is expecting Thomas for his interview. The bell rings. When she opens the front door to him, they both just stand looking in surprise and smiling in mutual recognition at each other as she exclaims: "Oh, it's you! We've met before! I didn't realise it was you. Come in, come in."

She is interviewing Thomas. They are sat around a dining room table together with a recording device in-between them

R: Lovely. Right Thomas.

T: Right

R: OK I have a blank piece of paper because apart from us chatting that time when we met when my governors came up to meet your governors, ...

T: Yes

R: ... I know nothing else about you. However, the reason I'm talking to you today is because when I talked to the clerking service for this borough and I was asking them, "Could they think of anybody who might be possible for me to talk to?", your name came up immediately. So, you know, with great pride, they said, "Well if you want someone really good ...", so you know, Penny was saying, "... definitely try Thomas", and Dan said, "Oh yes, yes".

T: [Smiles with modest pride] Yes

R: So tell me, really, the story, what is . . . , how did you get in to this and how did it all happen?

b) Introduction

This chapter relates to Thomas, a long serving governor at a range of different schools. Throughout the chapter all schools, places and names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. I was referred to him as a potential participant by the local council governors' clerking service. His story is one which raised issues of power and politics, technical rationality, race and recognition. Over the course of ten years of being a governor in several local schools, Thomas's motivation remained high and he had been celebrated by the local authority for never missing a governors' meeting. The argument followed in this chapter is that Thomas had been fully recognised at every step of his governorship. He had been in demand as a governor where ethnic minority governors were hard to find, he had been instrumental in working with the leadership teams in schools to make changes and improve standards and he had been recognised by the local authority for long and assiduous service. His experience as a governor had been a highly motivating experience. A contained and self-possessed man, he seemed at ease with himself and it was difficult to imagine him getting ruffled or agitated. He seemed secure in himself.

I was at an event to meet up with the governing body at the local secondary school some years ago. I was Chair of the governing body of the primary school which sent the majority of our children to that secondary school. Our two Head Teachers, both strong characters, didn't really gel together so we had decided as governing bodies to get our respective members to meet and socialise for an hour at their premises. As I stood in the small meeting room grazing on the snacks, I wondered whom to talk to. I already knew about four of their twelve governors present and wanted to talk to new people. I spotted a clean shaven, pleasant-looking, conservatively-dressed man in his fifties with a half-smile across the other side of the table nursing a drink. He had short hair and was standing slightly apart from the rest of the group. We did not have any ethnic minority governors on our governing body so I was particularly interested in making his acquaintance to get to know him better and to find out about his experience of being a governor at the secondary school.

He was as friendly as he looked, although more retiring than I, and we made amiable small talk. I found out that Thomas was one of the original people who had helped set up the secondary school, which had been started after a campaign by local parents some ten years earlier. This was exciting news for me as I had been one of the local population who had enthusiastically supported the campaign, so we bonded decisively over our shared passion to create a strong state secondary school in the community and marvelled at the current success of the school. *It was all your doing*, I said. His response was typically modest, *Amongst others*, he laughed. I had not seen him again since this first meeting.

When I arranged to meet at my house for a first interview and opened the door to him, we discovered we had already met - it turned out this was Thomas. So we had met before, had started to make friends and had a shared background in community endeavour. It made it easier to talk informally and in the discussion we quickly identified a strong sense of shared purpose and interest. He was a slow speaker and to the point, with a slight distinctiveness about his speech, not enough to be labelled a stutter, but a hesitation over, and within, each sentence. This endowed him with an impression of caution, someone who was considered and concise in his thoughts and speech respectively.

c) Back story

The two research interviews with Thomas took place in 2012 and 2013 a year apart in order to examine any changes over that time period. Before we met however there was a back story that I wanted to offer in the form of my own prologue.

As described above, although Thomas and I did not know each other before meeting and we had only exchanged a couple of emails prior to the interview, we had in fact met before. The two prior occasions had been fleeting and disconnected. It struck me that I could play around with describing and acknowledging this as a prologue after Stanley's (1992) exploration of the link between biography and fiction where the latter is mixed in various ways with the former to better see the biographical life story (1992, p. 68). A prologue is a pre-story, an opening part before the main story that acts as an introduction, establishes the setting and gives relevant background details. The example that gave me the idea of using this device was from the short play, *Jerusalem* by Butterworth (2009). It starts with a poetic prologue which sets the scene. There is another small prologue before each of the three subsequent acts, each develops the drama or the action to follow. This is often some earlier story that ties into the main one, and it may be a romance. By romance I mean a close relationship between people that may need to be understood to illuminate the main performance. The back story of this relationship of sorts which existed between Thomas and myself, I felt had affected the interviews with him, and it was therefore be part of the narrative which it was useful to outline.

d) Pen portrait

My first reaction to playing back the recording of the meetings was how calm he sounded, and how slow, careful and economic was his speech. He had a mild speech impediment – it took the form of a slight stammer, more of a hesitation, before he spoke, plus some verbal tics, such as saying, “You know?” frequently. I left these repetitions and tics out of the transcripts on the whole, mainly as it made him sound as though he was questioning me all the time although in fact this was just a verbal filler in his normal speech which seemed to have no relationship to the subject he was discussing and did not vary through the interview. I also cut more of these filler words out when inserting quotations for this narrative in the interests of readability and flow.

The encounters went smoothly and he seemed happy to talk although seemed not used to talking about this topic. I noticed I was prompting him more than in some other

research encounters with other people as he was slow to speak and neither speaks at length nor often very passionately. We pick up the speech patterns of others in an interaction, mirroring their words to punctuate the interchange. I also used mini-summaries frequently which could have been to fill pauses and to check I understood his points. He then often responded with an echo of my summary. We were definitely sharing information at some points, a reflection of my involvement in the activity which is the same as his. I was not a disinterested observer of his governorship and the encounter felt equal. My questions were informed by my own role as a governor and my responses to him, reflected this. It was an incremental and iterative process where we repeated, shared and built on each other's contributions, much as a pair of dancers would. I identified with him through this activity and our experiences and understanding overlapped. This added an element of ethnography unlike many research interactions where the interviewer may feel distant and remote from the activity being discussed.

Thomas is Afro-Caribbean and a placid, calm man, who was not excitable although could be passionate; not someone to make a fuss. Nor someone to wanted to stand out. He answered my questions reasonably and thoughtfully and briefly on the whole without verbosity. He laughed when there was humour and often, ruefully, when he was describing difficulties. I got the impression that these two discussions with me were the most intense and extensive conversations he had had about a work issue and particularly about governing as an activity.

We were both roughly the same age, in our 50s. Thomas had a different heritage to me which could have had a significance to his life experiences. We shared some areas of our outlook. A quiet man, he was reserved, spoke softly, so that I had to lean in closer and pay attention carefully to what he said to hear and understand him. He spoke slowly and deliberately and struck me as a man who did not get ruffled easily. He was thoughtful and serious and definite in what he said and stated his mind clearly.

He wore a smart, casual jacket, a tie and trousers with a crease. The trousers were dark grey and pressed, the jacket was tweedy. He worked in the computing business and had a son. I heard no mention of a wife or mother of his child. He was not a garrulous man, he chose his words carefully and sparsely. He was a leading light in the campaign to get this secondary school started. I was a peripheral supporter. He had been a governor in

two schools, a Primary and a new Secondary School. He was, at the time of the second interview, starting on a third governorship back in the Primary sector.

e) Being head-hunted

Thomas described his initial recruitment into being a school governor at his son's primary school.

Well, my son went to Ravensfield Primary School and I had left school a long time ago and I had no idea at the time what schools were about and after about a month or so, I would see the Head and we would have a chat and things.

[One day] he came to me and said, "Thomas would you like to be a governor?" and I said, "No!". And he kept on. Eventually he wore me down and I became a governor, ... [a] co-opted governor. (TT1, p. 2).

Persistence by the Head Teacher, with whom he had been developing a friendship, in asking him repeatedly, did the trick – this continual requesting signifies Honneth's (1995) second type of recognition of "self-respect". Thomas had been selected and not let go, despite refusing at first. The process of convincing him to agree to becoming a governor took some time but the regard that the Head had for him, persuaded him to acquiesce. Honneth's (Ibid.) psychological interpretation of this would be that Thomas exhibited a self-confidence which allowed him both to recognise the Head, and to allow himself to be recognized by the Head, so that they could enter into a mutually beneficial relationship with both rights and responsibilities: an essentially inter-subjective process, in which one's attitude towards oneself emerges in one's encounter with an other's attitude toward oneself (Ibid., p. xii).

Putnam also describes people being asked to participate as a powerful stimulus to volunteering and philanthropy. It is the frequent type of contact which first brings people to join a group of volunteers (Putnam, 2000, p. 121).

So he spotted you

He spotted me, yes (TT1, p. 3).

Thomas seems to have found the end of his working life stressful and he wanted to slow work down. As one phase was ending, he was being enticed into a new phase. It was flattering and seductive to have his talents and abilities sought out by the Head Teacher and illustrates Honneth's (1995) ideas about the need for recognition from others,

...that the fullest form of self-respecting autonomous agency could only be realized when one is recognized as possessing the capacities of 'legal persons', that is of morally responsible agents (1995, xv).

Thomas valued himself and had the self-regard to embrace this new role.

Thomas' second experience as a governor came some years later when two local parents from a different school approached him. I wanted to know what they had heard of him, perhaps it was also because he was a rare and senior black governor at a local school. I asked him how he came to be approached for his second governing role at the secondary school.

Yes OK, this, so that's interesting. So they had heard of you then or,

Something like that [laughs] why they chose me

How did they come to be knocking at your door?

I don't know how they came to be knocking, but they persevered

But that obviously works with you doesn't it? Because when the Head first asked you to be a governor, he had to persevere and the same with them, after a while you say, "Oh all right then" (TT1, p. 9).

This seemed to show the same pattern in his recruitment.

[They] said, "We think we need a high achieving community school, secondary school [here]. Will you join us?" And I said, "No, I'm too busy." And they said, "Well OK, you're having your Summer Fair soon, so can we come and set up a stall?" So I said, "Yes, I'll talk to the Head Teacher but I think that should be all right." So I talked to the Head Teacher and she said, "No, no, no, no". [I replied] "Well, it's too late now, I've told them, 'Yes'". So they came and set up a stall and about a week later they came back and said, "Won't you join us?", and so

So these were parents who wanted to start a new school?

In this area. So they came back a week later, we had a chat and I said, "No, no, no, I'm still too busy". But they kept on and so I said: "All right, you win". (TT1, p. 9).

They approached him twice after he refused the first time. Thomas was asked repeatedly on both occasions to persuade him to become a governor. In this way he was aware of a strong desire for others to have him join them, of being recognised in Honneth's term, for what he could contribute. He did not agree with alacrity but was seduced into it after repeated requests perhaps giving him the self-confidence he needed to accept their entreaties. It was the fact of them "keeping on" that worked with him and provided him with certainty about being wanted and needed as a governor.

f) Lack of social capital

Thomas described how his initial introduction to the first governing body was not an auspicious one.

And I've never been so scared in my life because I entered my first governing body meeting and I didn't have a clue what they were talking about and I just sat there, wondering why I'd volunteered but after a while I got into it and it was all right (TT1, p, 2).

Grenfell (2012) describes Bourdieu's concepts of habitus as the disposition we have consisting of our upbringing, outlook and habits,

Simply put, habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others (2012, p. 51).

Feeling like a fish out of water is applicable for this kind of situation that Thomas found himself in at the start of his volunteering journey, when he experienced an unfamiliar habitus and he initially felt fear and unable to participate due to lack of social skills, unfamiliar jargon and impenetrable rituals. I wanted to explore more of these uncomfortable feelings and what gave him the confidence to carry on despite them (Hoult, 2012).

And what about when you first started, you said, as with a lot of us, you walk in thinking: "I don't know anything about this, this is a scary business, almost a different language"?

Totally different language

I'm just interested when people first go to a governing body meeting, had anybody talked to you about what it might be like or . . .

No, not at all, it was: "Come along", you know, and I went in and I saw all these people and the Chair of governors didn't really make you feel comfortable. Especially I think because in my case, because she felt that the Head had recruited me and therefore maybe I would be on his side and so I went in there and I just didn't feel comfortable and she sort of wanted everybody to realise how much power she had, and that sort of thing. It was totally wrong, the whole set-up of the governing body. And so I really had to think whether I wanted to continue [laughs] (TT1, p. 3).

He felt it impossible to understand what people were talking about which can lead to alienation, a profound lack of confidence and a sense of inadequacy: *A fish out of water* in Bourdieu's term. Thomas was offered no kind of induction prior to the meeting and this made him feel like an unwanted outsider by all except the Head who had recruited him.

[Laughs] *It was just a coincidence [that I had the time to do it] and then, not understanding what was happening at these, just not, you know, just, I couldn't understand the speak: "What's all this?", so I had to learn a new sort of, almost, language - the school language. Acronyms. Jargon.*

So what about when new people started when you were Chair, did you try and do it differently for new people who came on? What did you do with those new people?

Well first of all you have to make them comfortable and make them realise that it takes time for them to understand everything that's happening so they mustn't be scared and so on, then you almost have to mentor them you know, and try and do your best to encourage them and so on. You don't need to intimidate them [laughs] and [so] that's basically what I do (TT1, p. 24).

Thomas' own unwelcoming and inauspicious start led him to act differently for future newcomers that he was subsequently responsible for inducting. He was made to feel scared and uncomfortable although this did not stop him from getting involved as he saw his inclusion as a challenge to be overcome.

g) Challenge

I was interested to know what kind of role he thought he would be performing on his first governing body and why the Head had sought him out specifically,

[The Head] seemed to be having some sort of difficulty with the governing body and it didn't take long for me to realise that the governing body was like a, when they had a meeting it was like a war zone, you know? The teacher governors were against the Head, various parent governors were against the Head and the teacher governors, the Chair of governors was against the Head [laughs], and you know, you couldn't see any reason why that sort of thing was happening, apart from the fact that the parents and the Chair of governors wanted to control the school. You know, and all aspects of the school, and the Head Teacher was there saying: "No you can't do that", and they resented that and the other thing is that most of them were female and he was a male, so it was very uncomfortable for him and I think he figured, "Well, here's another bloke", you know, and he felt I was a reasonable type, and so that's what happened. (TT1, p. 2).

So from the start of Thomas' first entrée to the governing body, he was aware of a degree of conflict between different stakeholders at the school: the Head, teachers and different groups of governors. He was approached to join as someone to help sort out some difficult issues that were affecting the school. There seemed to him as well to be a gender element between the male Head and the predominantly female governing body. To the Head, Thomas seemed to be a 'reasonable' person and a man to boot. A reasonable person is how Thomas comes across. He used to be a consultant in the IT sector where his job was to diagnosing faults through analysing problems, communicating with different teams and moving to a solution. But these governing difficulties were not of the hard- or soft- ware technical variety. These were complex and tangled human issues that needed navigation to interpret and manage. We hear from the passage above that there were multiple fissures in the group - gender issues with the majority of governors being women, with a male Head. There seem to be factions operating with parent governors plus the Chair of governors in opposition to the Head and the teacher governors also antipathetic to the Head. The governing body was rife with disrespect and was a struggle of refusal to recognise each other and to work constructively with the Head Teacher in Honneth's terms (1995, p. 132). No wonder the

Head was looking for a new ally when he approached Thomas to help sort out the difficulties.

So what made you go back [for a second meeting]?

Well it was a challenge. I felt sorry for the Head. He was trying really, really hard to bring the school round, you had the usual bunch of mothers at the school gate complaining about everything and some of them were on the governing body and you know, it was very, very uncomfortable for him um, and I just thought, well I've got to help him. You know, I've got to try and help him. So I stuck with it. ... It was the attitude of the teacher governors and the attitude of the Chair of governors and the parent governors. The parent governors were trying to tell him how to run the school you know? And that's his responsibility OK? And they wanted to interfere in all aspects of the day-to-day running of the school which is just not on, you know? And so I [was] talking to him and hearing what he wanted to do with the school and so on, what he was trying to do, you know, it just made me realise that he was on the right side and they were on the wrong side (TT1, p. 4).

So you went back, and then how did it go from then on, because presumably there was a little bit of a kind of a struggle going on, how did it work out?

Well, I think they realised that I wasn't on their side and they gave me a hard time [laughs]

In what way and how did that show itself?

In all sorts of ways, they, everything negative that they could say, they said. If they saw me coming out of a pub, it would be: "Oh look, I saw him and he was drunk", you know. I got really involved in the school, well that was later on but you know, they would watch my every action and if they could say something negative about something that I did, they would and they would try and spread it through the whole school.

And that must have felt very uncomfortable

It was very uncomfortable, it was very uncomfortable. And I, after a while, I decided that I had to try and change the governing body and um, well that's what I started working on there.

OK so what did you do? How did you do that part? What happened?

Well, I had to sort of point out to them where they were going wrong from a management point of view and I had to back the Head Teacher one hundred per cent and gather round all the, any of the governors that I felt you know, had a positive vision for the school, sort of talk to them, and sort of grow them you know, and then the other lucky thing that happened was the Chair of governors decided she'd had enough and resigned. And when she did that the, some of the parents decided that they would, parent governors, decided they would resign as well. And that was good [laughs].

Sounds like the old guard moving on

So then we could start recruiting new and more positive members to the governing body. Unfortunately we couldn't get rid of the teacher governors that easily and they continued to be very difficult but

Presumably they were a bit marginalised though as new people came on

That's right they were, but they were still able to cause quite a bit of difficulty and then we had to, we had, we developed a sort of split governing body, because there were things you couldn't tell these teacher governors, you know? And so

Otherwise they'd be agitating and blocking it?

Agitating and blocking it and trying all sorts, getting up to all sorts of mischief. So it continued to be difficult for some time. The other thing was, there was a PTA [Parent Teacher Association] and um they, the parents used that also to cause mischief and the Head encouraged me to join the PTA and I joined the PTA and I realised what was happening. And I decided that it needed to be reorganised and the whole structure of it needed to change and some of the parents got upset with my ideas and said they didn't want anything more to do with the PTA which was brilliant [laughs] and so I restructured the PTA and chaired the PTA for some time and that helped the Head towards developing some of his ideas in the school

Thomas talks of the miscreants as if he were a parent describing his naughty children (Berne, 1964). The old guard were isolated and ultimately carved out. So from a tone of

critical parent, the remedy was a quite sophisticated marginalising of the perceived 'troublemakers'. They were causing trouble for the Head Teacher. The PTA was another source of difficulty for the Head so Thomas got stuck into that too, took it over and cleaned it out. This makes him sound like the rogue but goodhearted gunslinger called in by the Sherriff to rid the town of the miscreant outlaws. He seemed to have occupied a more traditional masculine role in his lack of loquacity and his methodical and focused campaign of affecting change.

Although he did not dwell on it during the interview, the difficulties he experienced with a hostile reception from some governors was a clear sign of disrespect. Rather than intimidating him, this seemed to make his resolve stronger to meet these challenges head on and defeat the opposition that he was experiencing. The term 'split' used in this passage implies major differences of opinion between governors to the extent that the teacher governors were side-lined in certain discussions for fear of their influence. These was a true power struggle and the exclusion of these teachers demonstrates a realpolitik or practical outflanking of the dissenters to restore the authority of the Head Teacher.

What did motivate him despite the unfriendly, unsympathetic first meeting? It was a challenge and he responds to this, as a problem that needs solving, plus the idea of being able to provide help. He stuck to his guns and was persistent in working towards changing the power balance on the governing body. Thus it was not just that he was perceived as this type of person by the Head, he did actually have the skills necessary to see it through.

Thomas made definite moral judgements that there were some things that he felt weren't right. He wanted to fight on the side of right and had no doubt about which of these two sides was the right one to be on and this seemed to be based on the traditional authority of the Head Teacher which he saw as being in danger of erosion. His laughter when describing this phase almost seems to be saying, 'The existing governors weren't going to frighten me!' From feeling scared at his first meeting, he had moved to a position of defiance against the power blocks that he discovered. They tried to make him feel isolated and unwelcome during the power struggle. He decided to take matters into his own hands, to alter the balance of power.

In the second of his three governorships, he was joining a small group which just had a vision for a new state, coeducational, comprehensive school and few resources with

which to start it. Describing this campaign, Thomas talked further of the idea of responding to a challenge, testing himself in a role that was not easy and where he was not simply a place-setter as a man from an ethnic minority.

And just pause there for a minute for me, why did you get the vision? Why were you convinced that this was a good idea, given that it did have to poach money from the education budget elsewhere?

I like a challenge - and it was a tremendous challenge

OK

But the idea of having a high achieving school, secondary school, and having the children from the community go to that school. I mean I thought that was brilliant. But it was also the challenge of creating a school, a fairly large secondary school, from scratch, from nothing

Literally, yes. I mean it was barmy really, it's lunatic!

[Both laugh] *It was one of the hardest things, and it meant that we had to be having meetings almost every other night, all over the place. We were having meetings discussing all aspects of creating this new school and recruiting a Head and recruiting the staff* (TT2, p. 10).

It was a challenge and he was needed and he responds to this, as a problem that needs solving, plus the idea of being able to provide help. He stuck to his agentic contribution in terms of being persistent and obviously felt like a valued and recognised member of the small start-up group.

Later when it came to discussing his next role as governor, a similar situation is revealed: There is a sense of excitement about fighting against all the odds.

I decided that I would leave and then Wessex [the local authority] rang me and . . . said: "Look we got a problem with this Federation down in [the south]." And this time I said OK [laughs]

The first time - you said OK! Were you missing it then, do you think, a bit?

Again it was, you've got to have a little bit of a challenge in life haven't you? I thought: "This is another challenge so, it's a primary school so I'll go back and see what I can do for them (TT1, p. 14).

So the focus here was a growing confidence as a reforming governor, in his ability to make improvements on behalf of the school.

That's right and so now we're about one community governor short and that's about it so my next task, and I don't know why I do this to myself, I have to look at the committees. We have a situation where, we have about six committees, little committees, about four people on each committee and it seems to me that you need to have your governors, all your governors involved in all aspects of governance. When you have these small committees, for example if it's on the curriculum, then only the four people on the committee know anything about the curriculum, and the others, you go to the full governing body meeting, and the others wouldn't know what you were talking about really. You know, not really to any great extent, so I think I'm going to, what I've said is I'll write something on merging some of, if not all of, the committees. So that and I, the idea having governors belonging to one committee and not the other, I think governors should belong to all committees. So that's what I'll have to convince them to do [laughs] (TT1, p. 21).

He brought more work on to himself when he saw that another area of the governing of the school needed attention and sorting out. This could be seen as making work for himself in the school's interests. By his own admission, the main factor in his motivation is the challenge. For Thomas this seemed to be key in motivating him – with elements of competition and contest associated with success. Having taken early retirement, he could afford to work voluntarily and he found this role stimulating, perhaps as a substitute for the relinquished challenges of his previous work as a consultant.

The third time he was recruited as a governor:

Not really, not really, the main thing is that I do like a challenge. ... But no, I just like the challenge, I like, certainly with the schools, I, especially the school that I feel I can contribute something to. It's just so satisfying to see the progression of the school (TT1, p. 27).

I needed to unpack this word 'challenge' which kept cropping up in his responses.

And when you were at your most low, what do you do about that, what do you, when you say it can be stressful, you know, even if it's fairly sure, you're

looking to the next September and thinking there will be progress by then and there's support around you, but it is a voluntary activity so it must be just that it's the challenge idea, the idea that you are making things better?

Yes, it's getting to that, to that point where you can, you can see the results, you can see that you achieved that aim and I suppose when I'm really low what I do is I tend to talk to the Heads and the senior leadership team and so on, and see how they feel and get some, if they feel that things are going in the right direction, then that's sort of pulls me back a bit from the abyss [laughs] (TT2, p. 8).

And then you know what's going to happen; Wessex will be on the 'phone saying, 'We have a challenge for you'.

Exactly, exactly I think that, yes [laughs] (TT2, p. 10).

This was then linked explicitly by Thomas to his previous choice of professional work.

And the challenge thing, it did keep cropping up in the last interview, the idea of that if you feel there's a challenge that's been set or one that exists, you kind of feel motivated by that. Where does that come from, this idea of wanting to tackle things and succeed and achieve?

I suppose it's from working in the computer business. It's what I did, developing systems and then I went on to problem-solving, so problem-solving was a challenge because you would have a computer system in a company that wasn't working for some reason and they would ask you to come and find out what was wrong, which means that you had to take over the whole system and everybody stopped while you decided what was wrong and how to fix it. And frequently you didn't have a clue, you started off not having a clue and it took time and then the managing director would be on your back, 'When are you going to sort it out? When are you going to sort it out?' And you couldn't really give them any information because you didn't really know, but you had to sort it out as quickly as possible and ... (TT2, p. 15).

This sequence of problem, analysis, diagnosis and solution is almost perfectly congruent to the way he describes his work pattern and role as a school governor and implies that this kind of technical rationality is appropriate, even the best model, for

governorship. Thomas does not refer to emotional intelligence or to more messy problems that cannot be solved in a linear way.

h) Time available

And I'd been in the computer business for many years developing computer systems on mainframes and it was quite stressful at times you know, and I thought well, in the end I was working for myself, and I thought well I can cut right down on the workload and sort of go semi-retired and that's what I did, so I had the time.

What about the rest of your life? What were you doing? How did you have the time to be a governor because I know that's an issue for quite a lot of people, isn't it?

Well, at that time I was semi-retired (TT1, p. 2).

However, the demands of volunteering can spiral.

My one problem now is that I find I'm almost busier now than I have ever been and I've been trying to do less and less over the last couple of years [laughs] and the more I try to lessen the amount I have to do, the more I get things to do (TT1, p. 27).

He had the time to do it. I was interested in finding some background, some context, for Thomas' first foray into governorship. I discovered that he had no prior history of voluntary work although being a school governor had led into doing much more subsequently including chairing a local park support organisation, being a member of the Executive Committee on the local Civic Association and attending Local Authority Council meetings. Putnam describes how participation in one activity on a community basis can often lead on to others,

Fund-raising typically means friend-raising. So the more involved I am in social and community networks, both formal and informal, the more likely I am to be asked. And I'm more likely to agree if the recruiter is part of my network of friends...Once on the list of usual suspects, I'm likely to stay there.

Volunteering fosters more volunteering, in both formal and informal settings. Organizational involvement seems to inculcate civic skills and a life-long

disposition towards altruism, . . . In short, giving, volunteering, and joining are mutually reinforcing and habit-forming. (Putnam, 2000, p. 121).

i) Community

We had a meeting in [the] church and which we advertised throughout the area and lots of parents turned up and discussed it and decided yes, there was a need for a secondary school because the children in the community, they were going to about 40 different schools. They didn't know each other and a community school that they could all go to, community state school, would be great. We didn't have any money or anything like that, and I don't think we had any idea about how we could achieve it but we thought we'd give it a try (TT1, p. 8).

The meeting that he refers to was the one that I had attended as described in the prologue above. It was a crazy idea to start a new school with no political backing at that stage. They sounded like idealistic innocents with a vision embarking on what could turn out to be a futile campaign.

The Planned Happenstance school of thought of career development, when analysed, avers that it is rare that opportunities drop down from the skies. Krumboltz and Levin (2004) addressed this notion of the role of luck in career trajectories. What appears to be fluke, in fact is based on preparation and significant prior behaviour and outlook to make the ground fertile. It stresses that short term indecision can help so that we are open to new directions and achievements. The key to being lucky is to be on the lookout for opportunities; acting assertively; avoiding fixed goals and trying out varied experiences from any of which new directions may emerge (2004, p. 147). Thomas can be seen to have developed his voluntary governor career in just these ways. He agreed that his becoming a governor was about his personality and skills, was due to the happenstance of him being free, he was asked and it was a role where he felt he could contribute through tackling challenges. Of course, the fact that he had the time to linger in the playground, that he was supportive to the Head in their chats and he no doubt expressed interest in the way the school was going, were also all contributory factors.

So once we sat down and thought about it, we decided it was a brilliant idea, and one of the things we really thought about was that if our children went to school together then it would help the community so much

I do know, yes (TT1, p. 12)

So there's that training, you are learning new things all the time and you're meeting, the other thing is the children. They are incredible! You know? And once you get to know them, you sort of fall in love with them. And you see, they are incredible! And I mean you don't have to live with them [laughs]. You probably find at home they're not the same but in school you go in there and they're bright, they're intelligent and they're great. And you go out with them to various events and you talk to them and so on and they just make your day. So that's great once you get into that, that's brilliant (TT1, p. 25).

There is an ultimate joy in the work for the sake of the children.

j) Team work

Thomas grew his own supportive team. He laughed after telling me that he was winning the battle. Once there, he was going to do a thorough job. Now, far from the reluctant and fearful recruit who started out, he was moving across all areas to purge the undesirable influences through taking the decision-making power back from them.

It was really good, really good and it was, it encouraged us because we were working so hard, trying to achieve something and we'd actually achieve it and that gave us even more encouragement to go forward you know (TT1, p. 13).

There is a sense of excitement of fighting against all the odds. Thomas sounded much more upbeat when describing the story of setting up the new school which had represented years of work on a long campaign.

In the interview I complimented him and the campaign, recognising the effect they had had as a group. They formed a victorious team against the challenges that faced them, it reminds me of Hercules' mythical striving against almost impossible odds to complete his labours. Each of his governor roles seems to have involved a different trial of inner strength.

k) Race and gender

Thomas' African Caribbean origin was an obvious difference from the usual racial profile of governors and we discussed this in the interview. Race, his and mine being different, was an issue to discuss - rather than letting it remain tacit between us, I wanted to air it. I felt a bit awkward at bringing up the fact of the lack of black governors but as this was an obvious elephant in the room, as well as being a key aspect to discuss for me, I wanted to express it,

Is race an issue ever as on governing bodies? You know, I just was thinking, it's something I'm always trying to do, ... trying to recruit people from different ethnic backgrounds at Studland, not with any great level of success I have to say

Well I felt it was very, very important. I think ability's more important than race, just recruiting for race, by ethnicity I think is wrong. Ability has to be the main thing. However, it was a problem I had with the Cashman School and I think it might [have] had a little influence on my leaving because I don't think the governing body reflects the Cashman school community. Firstly most of the, almost all the governors at the time that I left were parents of children at Studland [the main feeder Primary school] and when you look at the children in the school and you look at the governing body, there's just no, it's not a reflection of the community and I've been trying to get them to understand that they had to somehow get a more diverse group of governors and, but no, I can see you would have the problem at Studland [Studland is the school at which I was a governor].

It's knowing what to do, isn't it? I mean I am stumped on that one, my line is, and it obviously worked with you, ask people directly, face-to-face, "Have you ever thought of standing, we could really do with you ..."

Yes, I think you've got to, it doesn't matter what the rules are, sometimes you have to, rules are made to be broken aren't they?

Yes and we have the co-opted governors so we can bring people in

Yes, I think that's what they should be doing, but every time there's a vacancy, they say, "Oh yes, so and so from Studland again and you think: "Oh no!"

I'm sorry, I do apologise [both laugh] So you end up with lots of white middle class women really don't you?

Yes but that's because they feel comfortable with each other

Yes and the role, I think the role of sitting in meetings

Yes that's right. So I think you have to go out and recruit by talking to whoever, if you need someone from that sort of area then you go out and get them rather than

I think using the word recruit is a good one because it implies it is an active role rather than just opening the door and seeing who walks through

That's right and the other thing is that holding elections is not going to work.

It's not going to work

No I know, there's a place for democracy, but we don't want too much of it!

[Both laugh]

It has its role, it has its place

Because there is a tendency for people just to elect in their own image

That's right, that's right, so you really do need to go and say, "You look like you'd make a very good governor and have you thought about it?", that sort of thing and get them in that way. I don't know what the situation is at the Cashman at the moment, in fact I might pop over there when I leave here. But I felt uncomfortable, I didn't really feel, I didn't feel uncomfortable on the governing body but I would look around me and I'd think, I would look at the children playing and think: "This isn't right". But well maybe one of these days ... [laughs ruefully]. The other thing of course is the staff, you have to also, it's not just the governing body, it's the staff as well

And in terms of the young people in the school that's probably a much more visible encouragement for them to see

But it's not just having the numbers, it's also having them in the right place because you can have all your ethnic cleaners and then nobody in senior management. But it's not going to just happen, you have to say, this is how this group, whether it's the teachers, this is how they should be, and go and make it happen. You can't just hold an election, it won't happen, and I think whenever we've had, I think they've only had, apart from myself, there's Martin Andrews and we've only had two other [black men] apart from myself in the ten years I was there (TT1, p. 19).

The issue is of his race compared to that of the majority of governors he works with. He felt this was a factor of importance. My guess was that the first Head Teacher he joined to support was from an ethnic minority. He left one governing body after ten years and felt annoyed that he was almost a token black governor there.

D) Conclusion

The feeling of the encounter was restrained and considered. The relationship between us was careful and reserved, the tone of which was set by him to start with, then got quite close at the end by discovering our shared motivation of promoting the community of the co-educational comprehensive school in the inner city in the sense of mixed racial profile and integrated in class terms and inclusive of special needs pupils. He was more animated when this was being discussed, from the emotion of talking about it. Initially he came across as stolid, was more distant, not so much of a talker as my other research participants, a bit more cautious, not wanting to talk for the sake of it. I think we started furthest apart and ended up closest together in terms of our shared motivation for making a difference. With other research participants I think I assumed more shared motivation and perhaps ended up further apart. With Thomas, we discovered what we had in common through our discussions,

No, so it's the community and the children and their future

I think so. I think so. Communities are important and children develop, grow up and make the community

And for me what always got me, or gets me still at events at the school, makes me feel all warm and emotional, it's not seeing my children, it's seeing the ensemble of all the children, that's what gets me and I get all choked up, it's seeing the community on stage or whatever they're doing

It chokes me up as well

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it always gets me going. Because I absolutely endorse what you're saying, to me it's all there is, the community is all there is, and the more we can help it to blossom and care for each other ...

You look and you see the future there, the community's future is right there and you're helping to develop it you know, and sometimes they just impress you so much, you think, "Woah!" that's,

And especially when you've known, with community schools you do get to see fellow pupils of your children and they start off and you see them at five years old . . . and whether or not your kid's still friendly with them or whatever, but

you see them when they are 16 and they are hulking great brutes, girls or boys, and it's: 'Oh hello, I remember you when you were ...' And its fabulous

It is great, absolutely great, it's great to be part of that development, great to be part of it (TT2, p. 18).

Overall, Thomas showed he responded to being needed in this problem-solving role. The rational analytical skills he had developed at a sophisticated level through his job as an IT consultant were in demand where power struggles were causing rifts that were damaging the education provided. He was unusual in being an ethnic minority governor in inner city schools and he now had a reputation with the local authority of having amassed senior experience of working with a Head to improve primary schools as well as being a founder of a new secondary school.

His calm demeanour and unemotional and clear insights combined with his values made him a force to be reckoned with. He had clear and definite ideas about the right and wrong way to be running a school, seemed to believe in moral absolutes and saw the authority of the Head Teacher as being paramount. He had no doubts or illusions about the powers of the governing body. Chairs had to have the good of the school community and the standards of attainment of pupils as their priority and had to have the clarity of vision, the communication skills and the authority to enable the governors to pull together to achieve this.

Thomas' approach was utilitarian in the sense of being transgressive when, in his eyes, the situation demanded it, as with actively encouraging more ethnic minorities to stand as governors. In this sense he exhibited a strong normative drive, he was trying to make a difference through reordering the recruitment of governors in a new, more diverse image. This did not just apply to the effect he could have on the school by being a governor but also extended to changing the composition of the governing body itself when that appeared to be ineffective.

He was someone who was agentic acting as the person who helped make things happen, a lieutenant. His own conviction and certainties enabled him to be a supportive senior governor to Heads beleaguered by difficult staff or governors and he worked with senior staff and the local education authority officials to improve the performance of the young people at the school. In terms of Honneth's three phases of the struggle for recognition, Thomas demonstrated a lack of need to demand love, confirming his self-confidence,

also the same qualities needed to work as a consultant in the IT industry. Through an early encounter with a Head who needed his help, his subsequent involvement in civil society, recognising others as independent human beings with rights like oneself, and working with them to create the basis for self-respect, is a marker of his experience as a governor.

How did Thomas' experience change over the longitudinal space between our interviews? After his initial foray into being a school governor and working his way up to being a successful Chair of governors he had then helped start an outstanding state secondary school from scratch. His pedigree thus proven to the local authority, he was, by the time of the second interview, being asked to rescue local schools who were struggling, either because of a power imbalance or bad governmental processes and senior leadership.

He had become even more enmeshed in the arena of local governance, being used as a willing peripatetic hitman for troubled schools and riven governing bodies. For the local authority, Thomas seems to be a dream governor; he was from an ethnic minority, with a fierce drive to help build community spirit, with the time to devote to the role being semi-retired and the professional skills to analyse problems and manage teams of people to overcome those difficulties. His calm and thoughtful nature belied a value-driven identity and firm moral certainties. He was able to withstand pressure, was highly motivated by the community in which he lived and was able to both engage in a power struggle and forge strong alliances with others.

In terms of his individual motivation, Thomas is a hard-working man used to analysing and solving problems of a technical nature. His career success was measured by his being called in to get to grips with problematic situations and solve them, first by diagnosing the issue and then by not only prescribing the solution, but implementing it. He has been recognised at the highest level of being esteemed, in Honneth's (1995) terms, by the local authority representing the community, who presented him with an award for never missing a governors' meeting over ten years of attendance. He had been asked more than once to step in to help sort out dysfunctional governing bodies, so he was well-aware that his skills and experience were in high demand at the institutional level. He had extra credibility, no doubt, with teachers and pupils, as a man from an ethnic minority, rather than the majority female, white school governor. His track record was impressive, demonstrating school governing structures being turned around under

his active leadership. This chimes with Honneth's ideas about self-respect, knowing that one can make a difference through one's involvement and agency.

At the level of the institution, his first contact was through his son who was a pupil. This gave him reason to be in conversation with the Head Teacher, who turned out to be beleaguered and bedevilled by a troublesome and divided governing body. Staff and parent governors were established in opposition to the Head of the school. His governing experience had built into a veritable second career, from a reluctant first recruit, via conflict and clashes, through to involvement in a school being set up, to being a prized Local Authority resource, recognised for his skills, analysis and persistence and transformational ability. This illustrates Honneth's (Ibid.) third requirement for human flourishing, the self-esteem gained by being valued for his work and contribution. So in terms of recognition, Thomas could feel fully appreciated. This respect though, did not come from everyone with whom he interacted – only from those whom he judges to be in the right, those to whom he himself offers respect. The corollary of Thomas' path to full recognition must have left a trail of those not accepted, valued or respected by him along the way.

Underlying this journey was a firm and unwavering sense of rising to a challenge, the rights and wrongs of school governing and a faith in community cohesion through a pupil-centred education which Thomas followed with determination. Through his psychological response to a challenge, his sociological belief in the pre-eminence of community and his resilience in withstanding conflict, or even fostering it and taking on any opposition to achieve his desired ends, he became a worthy challenger.

The narrative collected, originated from Thomas' material and filtered and altered through discussion with me as it was, does not tell us about the feelings or reactions of those against whom his determination and response to a challenge was pitted. As an unemotional and focused individual who could be seen to be inhabiting a more traditional male role, there would have been fall-out and reaction to his work to improve school governance. He talked in his first interview about the staff being predominantly female and they may have found his approach very uncompromising and unwilling to understand their concerns on any kind of emotional level. As I researcher I can only surmise about the opposition he faced. It would be a different kind of research to explore the various sides to differences of opinion on governing bodies and the causes and reactions to situations of conflict. Feminists would argue that his approach could

have caused as many difficulties as it solved but perhaps the realities of the exigencies of the management of education on the ground, preclude the luxury of being more consultative and collegiate in moving schools forward. Oakley (2000) talks of *giving voice to the silent* as a dominant feminist metaphor (2000, p. 47). The marginalised female staff and governors and their concerns remain voiceless in Thomas' narrative.

Despite his protests about it all taking up too much of his time, he obviously got a strong sense of achievement from being a governor. This was due in no small measure to being part of a team of like-minded governors at each school, all pulling in the same direction for agreed aims with the Head and senior school managers all gaining the admiration of the local authority representatives. Even under pressure in times of conflict this is still the sustaining motive when a member of his third governing body:

It was yet another challenge. And what assisted me was that the new Executive Head was very experienced and very successful and he was calm and a lot of it was directed at him, a lot of the negative stuff. And he stayed calm and the local authority they stayed calm as well and they kept stressing that I had one hundred percent backing from them. And they put in a lot of support even when councillors had been written to [by parents] and were getting a bit animated you know, they, the local authority stayed calm and some of it was very, very nasty stuff that was happening (TT2, p. 7).

Chapter 7: REBECCA'S AUTO/BIOGRAPHY

Chapter 7: Rebecca's auto/biography.

*I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," says he.
"I never died," says he.*

*"The copper bosses killed you, Joe,
They shot you, Joe," says I.
"Takes more than guns to kill a man,"
Says Joe, "I didn't die,"
Says Joe, "I didn't die."*

*And standing there as big as life
And smiling with his eyes
Says Joe, "What they forgot to kill
Went on to organize,
Went on to organize."*

*"Joe Hill ain't dead," he says to me,
"Joe Hill ain't never died.
Where working men are out on strike
Joe Hill is at their side,
Joe Hill is at their side."*

*I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead",
"I never died," says he.
"I never died," says he.*

Extract from *The Ballad of Joe Hill*. A song by Alfred Hayes, Music by Earl
Robinson ©1938 by Bob Miller, Inc.

I am due at a meeting. It is 6.30pm on a rainy, dark, windy and cold evening. I am tired and don't want to go out but I feel I have to attend. I am a school governor going to a meeting which has been in my diary forever. There is no excuse for missing it and even if there was, I would still feel I ought to attend as I take the role seriously and feel driven to participate. The school hall will be draughty and cold in a room with terrible acoustics, and the infant-sized chairs will be too small. By the end of the meeting everyone involved will be exhausted, hungry and eager to leave.

Once I get there it will be OK. I will look around at familiar associates, all of whom are there trying to be helpful. When the meeting starts, I contribute; I have experience and knowledge, just common sense plus the ability to express and articulate it. My governor colleagues respect me, they think I have a considerable amount to offer. I feel that my presence is useful and my expertise valuable and valued albeit in a low-key and rarely expressed manner. I know how to summarise a debate, give the wider picture, steer the discussion away from pointless avenues and stress the practical and the positive. I help to build a consensus.

a) Introduction

In the words of Josselson,

I think also that reflexivity becomes ethically necessary in the written account, not only in relation to our participants but also in relation to our readers. We need to say who we are as interpreters who bring our own subjectivity to the topic or people we are writing about. Interpretive authority cannot be implicit, anonymous, or veiled. We have to come out from behind the curtain and say who we are who are claiming our authority. This is not an argument for self-indulgent autobiography threaded into our texts. Rather, I am advocating self-disclosure that reveals what we are bringing as interpreters of texts (2011, p. 49).

This chapter is about my own experience in the role of school governor. Throughout this chapter all schools, places and names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. I have been a governor at four different schools in London and took up my present continuous period of governorship in 2008. It is a role I keep private, I hardly ever talk about it to anyone who is not directly involved as I am not looking for recognition of this work from anyone else. I attend formal evening meetings and informal chats during the week, read governing papers, ponder over issues, read and

write many, many emails and sit on governors' sub-committees. These activities can add up to several hours each month. The pace of work is uneven but over time it represents around three days of voluntary endeavour every month.

I have felt a sense of duty to be involved in some voluntary activity throughout my life and being a school governor is just one activity from a continuous series of such roles. I was aware that this was merely my own experience and I was therefore intrigued to know what made other governors volunteer to sit in long, evening meetings for a four-year term of office. Realising that others may have a quite different perspective on this role, I wanted to explore how being a school governor fitted in to their lives through the stories they told about it. I wanted to interrogate why they devoted time and energy to this task. It is important to the recruitment of future governors to understand more about what inspires someone to become and remain a school governor, as an example of community engagement.

An individual's political outlook and inclinations do not appear fully-formed in adult life. They are the result of the multi-layered experiences and a reflection of all the interactions that have exerted influence upon the person. The formation of an individual's identity, that sense of self which makes people act and react in certain ways, how they see themselves and which affects how others see them, is a complex and life-long process. Frosh (1991) talked about the constructed nature of the self, this means that it is built up developmentally, through some mechanism or set of mechanisms linking interpersonal relationships with internal mental structures (1991, p. 4). I recalled the views of the scientist earlier and saw how physical, emotional and experiential layers of connecting with and through others, form our whole which is constantly developing and evolving (see p. 36).

Attitudes may change over the course of a life and they can wax and wane with life's stages and one's openness to different stimuli. However any clear sense of historical development is made more difficult in our late modern "liquid times" which "saps the social foundations of social solidarity" (Bauman, 2007, p. 2). Frosh (1991) describes the confusion of modern times,

Modernity is characterised by uncertainty, rapidity of change and kaleidoscopic juxtapositions of objects, people and events (1991, p. 7).

Illeris (2014) cites Alheit's concept of identity which underlines the centrality of the individual's relationship to his or her life story and the importance of that life story to self-perception (2014, p. 67). As I attempted to analyse and unravel the different threads of my experience, relationships and upbringing that influence my decisions to be a school governor, I was conscious of the telling of my story in a certain way, which emphasised particular events and downplayed other factors.

There can be a discontinuity between the more overtly political times of the past and today's individualistic culture. In the hurly-burly of daily life, we do not habitually make reference to our upbringing although in terms of our identity, aspects of the times we grew up in and the political and social values we inherited, may be key factors. This may lead to the determination of our motivation in diverse areas including affecting the way we see the world and particularly the extent of the urge we feel to contribute to societal groups and institutions; in other words, to our sense of belonging and community cohesion.

I was interested in comparing and contrasting my experience with that of others to see how different or similar were the ways in which we expressed our reasons for this kind of volunteering. I set myself the same questions that I asked of my research participants, namely:

1. What is the experience of a small sample of governors (including myself) with regard to governorship?
2. Which factors emerge as important in my/their motivation to become and remain governors?
3. How can these experiences be theorised drawing on literature from psychology, sociology and community engagement literature?
4. What does the research into school governance reveal about social solidarity through community interaction?

The recognition and discovery of the lineage of our political heritage can be illuminating in terms of the current choices we make, the activities in which we participate and the agency with which we co-operate in the life of the community. The influencing factor of an individual's background is one thread that can form part of identity or character. In this way the past is drawn into the present. Part of my motivation is the desire to do something positive with regard to community cohesion, which is particularly important in a cosmopolitan inner city where tensions and conflict

can arise (West, 2016). However, the term community cohesion is not a simple concept and can be seen as a loaded term meaning a monocultural, limiting and oppressive factor in keeping people conforming to an imposed norm, at least in public, whatever their thoughts and actions in private. This is in contrast to a concept of something more complex, dynamic and negotiated as outlined by West,

... and think hard about a workable multiculturalism, so as to understand and nurture our shared humanity and the value of difference while thinking seriously about ways of life that may trouble and divide us (2016, p. 180).

To identify and disentangle these previously unexplored past influences, we need to identify the key individuals who influenced us, specify the dominant attitudes which affected us and follow the threads of inherited influence through to the present day. These can be invisible threads, unseen until unpicked and traced back fully to the past so that they can be articulated in the present. We tend to know how we are at any one time in the present but perhaps that view can be affected when we are explicitly questioned about the influences of the past, as in a normal busy life, the opportunities for this kind of temporal reflection are few.

Through narratively researching my life history and that of other active civic volunteers, I sought to illuminate how human commitment is fostered to engage in cooperative action. In this chapter I look at the influence of my parents, my early family life, my experience of growing up and my present position. In doing so I draw on those authors such as Rose (2010) who described and chronicled the intelligentsia of the 20th century as well as the context of those times when my family background was embedded. Honneth (1995) and Putnam (2000) help to make sense of my life story.

b) Inheritance

In interrogating my sense of community commitment, the emergence of inherited political values arose from my own reflexivity about my past as a significant thread. I inherited strong political beliefs. Thinking about how these views and attitudes had been created through exploring my past, led me to examine the position of my parents as early influencers on my values. They were both born in 1919, the year the First World War ended. My mother, Irene, (meaning ‘Peace’) was the daughter of practising Methodists from York and her father was a solicitor. My father Tony was the son of an engineering technician. My father’s maternal grandparents had run a small local dairy in Battersea, London. In terms of class, my mother was upper middle class coming from a

big rambling house with a large sloping garden in a village on the outskirts of York. My father's class was more complex to define – perhaps lower middle class best describes it. Irene and Tony met at a Labour Club dance at Oxford university and Irene was intrigued by Tony as he was refreshingly different to other Oxford suitors who bought her flowers and took her for afternoon tea at the Randolph Hotel. Tony, blissfully unaware of such social niceties, for their first date instead invited her back to his student lodgings where he offered a repast of an orange and a half a Kit Kat biscuit each.



Left: Sidcup, 1941

Right: Birmingham, 1974

Figure 4. My parents, Tony and Irene Corfield.

The photograph on the left in Figure 4 shows them on the day after their quick and simple wedding which took place in 1941 early in World War II. This photograph was taken the day after the wedding in the garden at Tony's parents' house. Irene is wearing the vivid red dress in which she was married and has her carpet slippers on, a source of great family amusement as this was their 'official' wedding photograph. They got married in order that my mother could stay overnight at Tony's barracks in the war, as unmarried couples could not spend the night together. To get to the register office they jumped on a bus with two friends and Tony's brother, although Tony nearly missed

boarding as the bus was full up. His brother dragged him on at the last moment to great hilarity. A curtain ring was used as they had not bought a proper wedding ring.

They came from very different backgrounds. My mother's home was constrained and extremely religious. Physical affection was hardly shown, and free-thinking and frivolity was to be avoided at all costs. Her parents had a strong Methodist faith to the extent of observing Sundays strictly, going to chapel three times on that day, and not reading anything except the Bible. When her older brother took her secretly to the theatre as a teenager, her highly moral father was so outraged at this disgracefully louche behaviour that he took to his bed and would not talk to anyone for two days. Irene's mother Janet was a remote figure who employed someone to do the childcare, and who never expressed any love or affection for her daughter. Irene resolved to live her own life differently and was determined to foster an expressive and close relationship with her partner and children. Despite this dour home environment, Irene's mother, Janet, was a dynamic woman in her own right. My mother told me with pride that Janet was the first woman to drive a car in the village in which they lived at the turn of the 20th Century and her unusual hobby was carpentry. I am now in possession of a couple of intricately carved small wooden bookcases made by Janet.

Irene attended a Quaker school in York and was impressed with that religion's lack of dogmatism and its concomitant values of simplicity and equality. A formative experience for my mother was on a school exchange visit to south Wales where one cold winter she was put up by a local mining family who were very friendly and hospitable and who no doubt were paid a small allowance for giving her lodgings. It was only towards the end of the week of her stay that she was dismayed to discover that her hosts, the parents and their three young children had all been sleeping in one bed covered with coats and jumpers instead of blankets. They had given her, the visitor, a room to herself with all the blankets that the house possessed. Shaken, she gave the family her pocket money for the week which probably exceeded the normal weekly income for the household and the injustice of their evident and shocking poverty made a deep and lasting impression on her.

My father Tony's home life was just the opposite in atmosphere to Irene's. His mother Florence was a very social, dominant and garrulous character who loved music and singing. A true autodidact, she regularly attended WEA classes to learn about politics, art and history. Her house was full of life, with frequent visitors, animated chatter,

music, songs and laughter as well as socialist talk. Irene said she completely fell in love with the warm, casual, bohemian family atmosphere at Tony's house and the sharp contrast it presented to her own upbringing.

Both of my parents were pacifists who believed in international brotherhood and social justice but were also convinced of the need to act against Hitler and the Nazis during the war. Tony was concerned with the transforming power of education and was a leader at providing opportunities for educating trade union members so that workers could bargain more effectively with employers to improve conditions in the workplace. Influenced by the views of Marx, early philanthropists and co-operators such as Robert Owen (1771 – 1858) and writers on social justice, they dedicated much time and effort to supporting the Labour Party and international work. They saw the election of a Labour government as the way to create a fairer society through the redistribution of wealth and power. They exactly fitted this description from Rose of Labour socialists (2010),

... where Labour socialism was ethical, idealist, and undogmatic, early British Marxism embraced a more "scientific," materialist, and rigid world view... Where Marxism defined exploitation in purely economic terms, Labour socialists, brandishing their Everyman's Library volumes, promised beauty in life, joy in work, a moral vision in politics. Following a long line of radicals and mutual improvers, they proclaimed that knowledge (rather than the ownership of the means of production) is power (Rose, 2010, p. 299).

My parents were actively involved in the local Labour Party branch in a strongly conservative area in the London suburbs and my mother was a Magistrate for many years and a tutor for the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), an organisation established in 1903 to provide educational opportunities for those without qualifications. My father was the Education Officer for the largest trade union in the UK in the 1960s; he was Director of the WEA Social Studies Centre, he edited the WEA News, their national newsletter and wrote a history of the origins of the trade unions' involvement in the establishment of the WEA (Corfield, 1969). He had been a WEA Tutor previously, and ran regular summer schools for trade unionists, strongly believing in the transformative power of education, both for the individuals concerned and for a more equal society. Later in the 1970s he was Principal of Fircroft College, a Workers' Education College which offered a year-long residential course, had no examinations

and aimed to educate and train shop stewards and other lay union representatives, to increase their confidence and effectiveness in the workplace, (rather than as a precursor to university). The photograph on the right in Figure 4 was taken in 1974 in their garden. This picture is my parents as I knew them as I was 15 when it was taken.

Much of my political influences were initially from my parents, combining as they did a powerful mix of radical politics and moral values. During my childhood I was immersed in a Labour and trade union political discourse. Our house was host to Labour Party meetings, Women's Section meetings and socials with beer, sherry and salted peanuts which invariably ended with everyone singing around the piano as my father loved playing old tunes including pub favourites, folk music and workers' songs such as 'The Ballad of Joe Hill' (Hayes, 1938). I can trace back to my parents my inheritance of the importance of promoting social justice, feminism and egalitarian and internationalist values. Our bookshelves were indeed full of Everyman volumes and political works (Rose, *Ibid.*, p. 299). In my mid 20s I consciously watched each national conference of the main political parties on the television to assess and check for myself which had the views closest to my own. It was at that time that I took out membership of the Labour Party.

My mother provided the clerical support for my father in his writing and I remember accompanying my mother during school holidays in the 1960s as she delivered her own course of WEA lectures on Women in Society at local venues, exhibiting what could be labelled "middle class dissidence", or opposition to the dominant ideology (Sinfield, 1989, p. 273). I boggled at the racy titles of the Penguin books she collected for her research on topics such as sex, drugs and deviance, although the content was disappointingly learned to my teenage eyes. She used to go to court as a Justice of the Peace every fortnight, a role which continued for 37 years in Dartford and then in Birmingham. She was a school governor for two schools when I was at Primary School too although my memories of that time are sparse.

At that time each main political party was allowed to nominate representatives to public bodies and my mother stood as school governor and magistrate to be a representative for the Labour Party. Neither body had too many Labour supporting members, particularly the magistracy, so she felt her role was important for that reason, so that the bench was not totally dominated by Conservative values. Her first battle as a magistrate in the 1960s was to challenge the compulsory wearing of a hat in the role for women.

She had always hated wearing hats and as a feminist she considered it irrelevant and oppressive for women and intimidating for the offenders, so she adamantly refused to wear one whilst 'sitting on the bench' at court. Whilst this was considered most irregular amongst the middle and upper class Conservative magistracy, there was nothing that the other lady justices, nor the clerk of the court could do to force her to wear a hat. In this one small act of class rebellion, in her own quiet but firm way, she triumphed and set a new standard of informality for the Dartford circuit. A dissident indeed and one always resolute in defending her principles.

So undoubtedly, in terms of values, there is a moral inheritance here which is directly from my parents. When exploring the factors which contribute to the development of my particular character it is an inescapable conclusion that my outlook comes to a large extent from the way I was brought up. My parents were both serious people, who were driven in their work, radical in their politics and unstinting in their efforts to make the world a better place. When I was a shallow teenager, I thought them too dull and serious-minded and compared them unfavourably to my friend's parents who seemed much readier to drink, party and be frivolous. Now I look back on the influence of my parents and the example they set with pride. Rose's (2010) exposition of the history of the intellectual development of the British working classes corresponds directly with scenes from my past.

My mother was very good with people one to one; shy, thoughtful and considerate, she was a natural counsellor. She was warm and welcoming and could be very determined and a great fighter for a cause. A striking story about her is when she met a friend of my older sister called Louise. Louise was going through a terrible divorce in the courts in the 1970s. After an unfair trial she was completely distraught when the husband was duly awarded full custody of their children and she was not even allowed visiting rights which was highly unusual practice. A great correspondent, my mother wrote Louise a long, personal letter urging her not to let the grossly unjust court judgement stop her trying to maintain contact with her children, saying that they would want to be reconciled with her when they were old enough to understand what had transpired, as long as she kept showing how much she loved them. Louise did keep in contact with the children as far as she was allowed to, by sending birthday and Christmas cards each year, and when they were over 18, and independent of their father, she was able to renew a close and loving relationship with them. After a gap of many years, Louise was killed in a cycling accident. In her handbag that same letter written by my mother was

found. Louise had kept the letter close to her everywhere she went for all of those intervening years because of the hope it instilled in her when she needed it most.

My father was driven to achieve in work which would change the world for the better, and he was sociable, slightly other-worldly, resilient and good-humoured. He met my mother through a shared interest in socialism and they had a very close relationship, working together and always devoted to each other. My mother was the more practical one of the two and carefully managed all their money. Frugal in their habits, they were un-fussy in the extreme. They were both active in the United Nations Association, the trade union movement, the Co-operative and the Labour Party all their lives – always on a voluntary basis. Irene’s feminist outlook would not allow her children to call her by the word Mother or Mum which she said described a role she inhabited and was not her name. It was as ridiculous and insulting as calling the window cleaner “Window Cleaner” or the retailer “Shopkeeper” she said, and we called both parents by their proper names all their lives.

Initially attracted to communism at university, their move to the mainstream of British politics reflected an increased disillusionment with the Communist USSR. Rose (2010) explains,

Yet the respective ideologies taken up by the Labour and Communist parties did create a self-sorting mechanism, with idealists and self-improvers attracted to the former, cynics and authoritarians to the latter (2010, p. 299).

Both my parents were indeed idealists, involving a strong faith in humanity and also a certain naivety or innocence in terms of the more base human traits. My father ran extra-mural adult education university courses and trade union summer schools on Labour history each year during his summer holidays. Their influence upon me comes not from any expectation they had, but in their interest in, attention to and approval of the things I did, with them admiring my voluntary work, agreeing with my choices and celebrating any contribution I could make.

Although his description is of Americans, my parents therefore personify the long generation described by Putnam (2000) in his portrayal of the dominant and most dogged volunteers. Born just after the First World War and coming of age just at the start of the Second World War, my parents saw it as their duty to try and improve the world. They had celebrated the development of the NHS, the inauguration of the United

Nations and the huge landslide victory of the UK Labour Party in the polls just after the Second World War which was fuelled by returning soldiers.

Most elections are decided by fear; the 1945 election may have been the only one in the twentieth century to be decided by hope. Men who had fought for Britain for six years were saying that they were not going to go back to the old unfair society of the '30s. They believed in better, which is why they got something better (Beckett and Russell, 2015, p. 9).

They had faith in the electorate to make sensible choices for a more equitable future. They felt a responsibility to work hard at changing society to make it a fairer, freer and more peaceful place, politically, socially, educationally, in work and in the international arena. They saw their role as fighting injustice and promoting mutual understanding and equity in an unfair and unequal world.

Putnam (2000) notes the decline of political participation of all sorts in the USA,

Today's cynical views may or may not be more accurate than the Pollyannaish views of the early sixties, but they undermine the political confidence necessary to motivate and sustain political involvement.

So perhaps because of the dysfunctional ugliness of contemporary politics and the absence of large, compelling collective projects, we have redirected our energies away from conventional politics into less formal, more voluntary, more effective channels (2000, p. 47).

The name of my mother's role as a Justice of the Peace actually summed up her interests very appropriately. My father did not talk about his war experiences, finding it too difficult to discuss. He was a major, as were all Oxbridge undergraduates, and he lost many of the men under his command. He narrowly missed death himself due to a broken ankle. As an injured paratrooper he was consigned to training duties and here discovered his skills and love of training other adults.

The atmosphere in our house was sensible and the living was plain. My father added a touch of the humorous, coining pet names for all his children and his lusty singing and piano playing added colour. They both loved listening to records including Irish folk music, classical music especially Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and Schumann's songs, and protest songs. They appreciated art and would visit a film club weekly to watch

foreign films. They devoted themselves to Labour and trade union causes and campaigns.

c) Family life

So far, so clear, but my political interest in community development is not shared equally by all the family. Of my five siblings, only a couple are politically active, so parental influence is not the only, or even the most dominant, feature of our sense of self, otherwise all my siblings would be involved in voluntary work too. We all grew up in different political eras of course and this political context makes a big difference. As a child born just at the start of the 1960s, my early awareness of politics was in the mid to late 1970s and the 1980s when the Conservatives were in power. I lived in Birmingham when the IRA pub bombings took place, lived in London at the time of racial tensions in the inner city and volunteered for years to train Labour women to take up positions in public and political life. I was a child of a more pragmatic political and less ideological time than my siblings. I was also the youngest child of six. The family was slightly split into the first four children and the last two. Child number five was: *A happy surprise* according to my mother, arriving six years after the previous fourth child. Three years later they had me to keep him company, but this good intention did not transpire as he resented my existence, we were complete opposites and we did not get on well at all growing up. My oldest sister was 14 years older than me and I only ever remember her being at university and waiting longingly for her and my other siblings to come back at Christmas and other family events as they brought fun, games and a party atmosphere when they all convened at home along with various partners.

Being the youngest child was a role that provided me with a lot of spoiling in terms of attention and affection (from all except the brother closest in age) but I was also always the child who obviously knew least about everything. I remember the surprise when I went to college and found everyone took my pronouncements seriously, whereas in the family I was generally the subject of good-natured teasing and jocularly. In the main I remember a happy childhood, with parents who were interested in me but not overly-focused upon me and siblings who seemed fairly glamorous and slightly remote.

Because of the nature of my parents' work, we did not have much money and so I was not spoilt in terms of material goods. I was the only child in my primary school who wore grey socks, darned and worn by at least two previous siblings, whereas other girls wore white socks. Buying a party dress was a big event and happened rarely and most clothes were hand-me-downs from older cousins with more money. Holidays were

always in the UK, and for one week every year we stayed at Cirencester agricultural college (now the Royal Agricultural University) to coincide with my father being there to teach a trade union summer school. It was a very grand Victorian Tudor building with large grounds to explore and I made friends with a local girl and stole some of her toys when I left. Being the youngest and very well loved plus not very well off did mean I could be distinctly amoral at times with a disregard for others' property that I wanted to own. My mother and father's sense of duty showed itself when they had both of their fathers to live with them at the end of their lives which must have been hard work for my mother, but was work she did gladly. Years later, deemed as 'the practical one of the family' I was the main carer for both of my parents in the last years before their deaths when they moved to live near me.

d) Youth

Why did I start to be a governor in the first place and how did it happen? I have always done voluntary work for various reasons. One was a sense of duty that I can trace directly to my parents who imbued in me a sense of needing to be doing something of this kind, beyond earning a living. I first started volunteering when I was running a restaurant business. I had time in the day when the business was closed and felt that, being a small business owner, all my relationships were based on money which I did not like. I bought and sold and hired and rented and paid and earned. I needed something else for a different kind of meaning that was not based on a financial transaction.

The first school governing body I joined was as a Labour Party representative when they needed a Labour Party person on the board. At that time political parties put forward nominations to serve on local schools with the idea of gaining balance by having representatives of all three parties, Conservatives, Liberals and Labour. The Conservatives never had a problem in finding candidates for these voluntary posts (often women or the retired) so it was important for balance that Labour people stepped up. My local Labour Party were always sending information round about governor vacancies, so I volunteered.

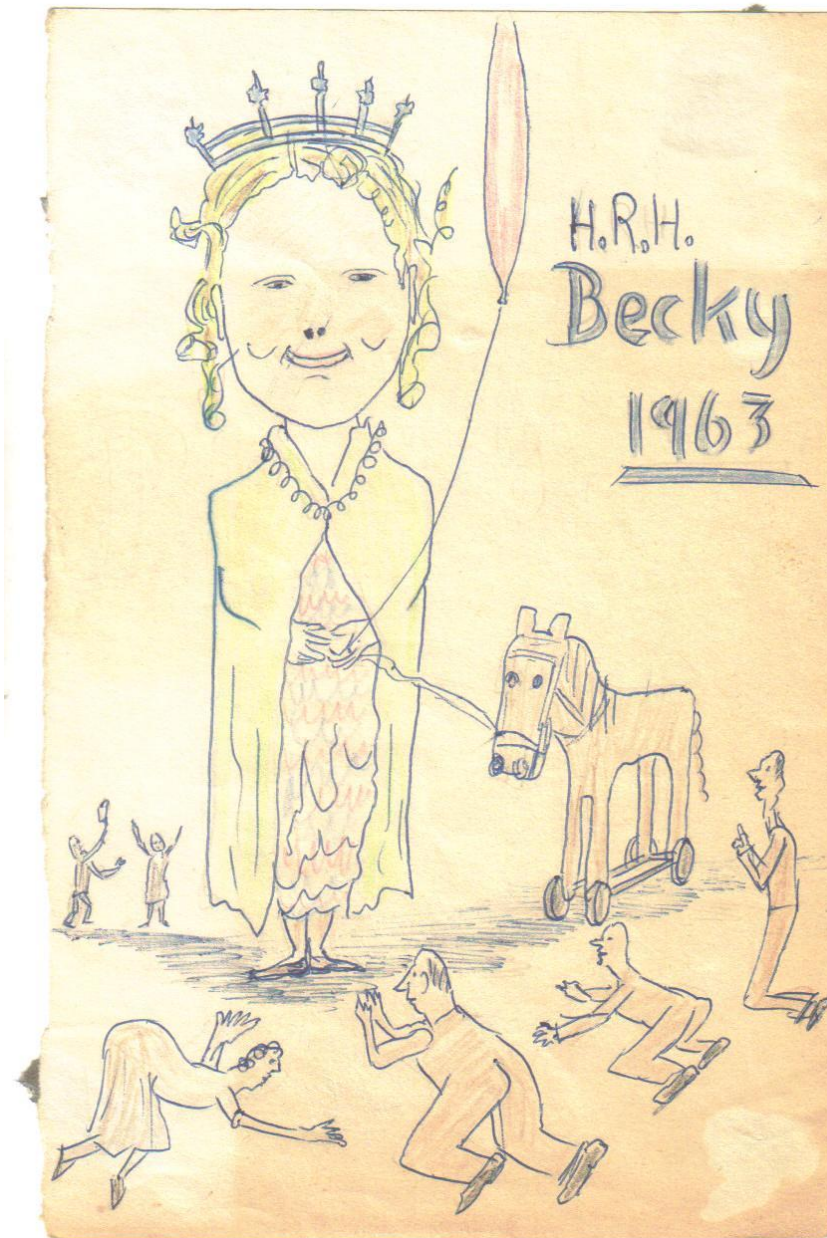


Figure 5. Christmas picture. One of the amusing cartoons drawn for me each year by my father, Tony. Here, I am aged four, dressing up as a princess and family members are falling at my feet in obsequious deference to my 'royal' personage.

Reflecting on the use of personal documents to lead to increased enlightenment, I had such relevant private artefacts in my possession. Every year at Christmas we had a family tradition. My mother and father would work on producing a cartoon for each of the six children. On Christmas Eve, they would come up with an idea or episode from each child's life the preceding year, often quite small such as winning a race at the school sports day, or a domestic disaster that had befallen us, that they thought was relevant as a subject of a caricature or cartoon for each of us. My father would draw or depict the idea and my mother would colour the picture in, with crayons. These were

amateur efforts created just for fun. With six children I think my father felt it to be quite a strain each year and probably deeply regretted ever having started the practice. When we awoke on Christmas morning, we would rush into our parents' bedroom to open our small stockings, yes of course, but first we wanted to see our Christmas picture, pinned to the top of the rugby sock which held our presents. These pictures are treasured in the family as our family art. Kept in scrap books, we never tire of looking through them and laughing again at my father's wry look at, and commentary on, our lives in each succeeding year.

These acted as an access point for me. As little humorous portraits, they are a totally subjective parental view of a daughter. As personalised snapshots from my youth, they do show a side of me that was perceived by others at that time. There may be lessons I can draw from their depiction of the child I was seen to be, which will evoke early signs of the adult I was to become. It certainly gave me a hook or handle to approach writing about my own motivation as an adult to be a school governor. Who was this young person the caricatures showed? She seemed to be seen at times as creative and extrovert, at others independent and headstrong. I recognise aspects of the child I was, and also the adult I have become through these exaggerated and comical depictions of aspects of my character. The comparison and contrast between my memories of these incidents and the way I was depicted gave the potential for thought and reflection. I recall the story behind each picture with me as the main actor and I can remember too the subjective feelings around the event as I experienced it.

The retelling of these stories, which without the artwork I would not necessarily remember, thereby provokes other memories, prompted by these hand-drawn family treasures. They provide a portal through which I can revisit and recall different aspects of my own development and the situations which, and the people who, influenced me. It has provided support and assistance when writing about my life and influences. It is an aid to making connections between the past and the present which adds to the total representation I am able to see.

e) Professional identity

I am a professional careers counsellor which affords me an identity in the careers guidance profession. For the last 30 years I have worked in this profession, changing roles and working across traditional boundaries. I define career broadly beyond just jobs, training and education, to include voluntary work, caring responsibilities, child-

rearing, interests, hobbies and any other activity throughout the course of a life. I position myself at the counselling end of a profession that also includes, at the other end of the spectrum, recruitment agencies and job placement organisations. I discovered the skills of listening, interpreting and unconditional positive regard for my clients were easily transposed to the research context meaning that the research interviews I conducted were comfortable for me and rewarding for my participants, according to their verbal feedback.

As Giddens observed:

*The reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self. Put in another way, in the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a **reflexive project**.*

[Author's original emphasis] (1991, p. 32).

Reflexivity is essential in this profession. To work in a quasi-counselling relationship with strangers, to quickly establish rapport and a trusting relationship, takes a person who is confident and secure to take the initiative with clients in this helping role. Working one-to-one with others to understand the issues they are facing and be able to help them interpret and analyse their choices and decisions requires a level of sensitivity and insight from the practitioner. One of the prime qualities needed is curiosity about others and about oneself in terms of likes and dislikes, styles and behaviour and prognosis and possibilities.

f) My motivation

Deem et al (1995) allude to one aspect of the current discourse around governing, and identify,

[a] prevalent belief that involvement in school governance, alongside school choice, is a potential form of power or empowerment for lay people, especially parents (1995, p. 134).

Contrary to some of the current discourse about people who become governors, I was not someone with too much money coupled with time on her hands when I started to be a school governor. I was a self-employed, lone parent, sole wage-earner, single woman in her 50s with two school-age children and not in the greatest health. However the desire to participate in voluntary activity ran deep in my psyche and as an adult I have always undertaken some voluntary activity.

In exploring with my participants their motivation for this involvement in local school governance, understanding the significance of early political role models was important. Enquiring into their early influences and family backgrounds can provoke reflexivity about, and recognition of, key people, dominant attitudes and central inheritances that have previously been unexplored (West, 2001). Motivation to do anything is bound to be multi-faceted including biology, family and experience. One of the key strands can be personal inherited family/parental influences and values which together with happenstance plays a part. My becoming a local school governor in 2008 was an example of motivation following on from an opportunity arising with a fair sprinkling of happenstance. Krumboltz and Levin (2010) write about happenstance with regard to career development. They break down circumstances based on 'good fortune' and 'fate' to show how openness to opportunity, assertiveness and awareness are helping to select what seem to be such completely random lucky breaks.

There was a personal element with regard to the circumstances of the process of becoming a school governor. This is the micro level of interpersonal interactions, emotional responses and embodied reactions. In my case a political colleague I knew only very slightly from the local Labour Party approached me to ask me if I would stand as a governor at a local primary school as she was stepping down. She was keen to find a replacement with a similar outlook and values to take her place and alighted on me. She felt this was important as the school was a state school with an excellent reputation surrounded on all sides by private schools and felt it needed safeguarding as such. Although at first I demurred and suggested another mutual acquaintance who could perhaps take on the role, she reacted with horror and was insistent that only I could do it. This was undeniably flattering and amusing as she insisted that I was the only person who could appropriately safeguard the ethos and standards of the school.

I hesitated because the co-educational state school was so local, was already doing very well and the area of influence I could have seemed likely to be limited to just one school. My motivation was making a difference and I rather fancied a wider national role for my voluntary contribution. However, one fact that helped persuade me was that a new Head Teacher had just been recruited after a period of some turmoil resulting from a messy transition between Heads. I thought that it could be helpful having someone with previous experience such as my own, coming on to the governors at that time to help smooth the start of the new Head's tenure. Although the school was in a middle class area and had regularly been deemed 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, (the national

school inspection service), a local resident had told me that thirty years earlier, the school had had a dreadful reputation. So the local commonly held view that the school would always do well just because of its middle class catchment area was evidently not true.

The leadership of the school was a critical factor in its success. A new Head's arrival was in my eyes a pivotal point as previous to her appointment there had been a difficult year with various staff factions and issues which had been destabilising for the school as a whole. This was the fragile territory being inhabited by the new recruit, with a staff group many of whom had been employed for many years, who had been riven by disputes into at least two camps for a year: they might not be welcoming to an outsider taking up the headship. I considered that I might be in a position to offer experience, positive insights and support for the incomer. The fact that the school was an outstanding state junior school surrounded by private and religious schools was an important factor for me as an ardent supporter of secular state education. Being a governor would be playing a small part in helping to maintain this valuable community asset.

It also happened to conveniently dovetail with my circumstances at the time in that I had just finished a six year term as Vice Chair of a small national development charity. In addition I was self-employed and could be available for meetings and both my children were at the school meaning I was physically present at the school twice a day and so I agreed to put myself forward. I had been a governor twice previously so knew what the role entailed. I met the current Chair in the local pub and I believe he saw someone to whom he could pass on the leadership mantle. I was co-opted at the next meeting as a community governor and a year later I was chairing the board of governors. However, I had not actively sought out this opportunity and this fact contributed to my occasional feelings of ambivalence about the role.

g) My experience of governorship

My motivation to do voluntary work, which includes having been a governor for the last eight years, is something that I haven't explored beyond knowing that I wanted to make a difference and do good. "Good" for me here means community building according to my political world view e.g. helping people have fair and equitable access or improving their chances. But why do I want to do good in this way? Checking my professed motivation in old diaries and there are no simple causes only a complex web of reasons.

I could classify what I have done by type of activity or length of involvement or give each a ranking for successful outcomes or for the sense of satisfaction from being involved. None of these would explain what lies behind each choice. I have always felt the need for an engagement that differed from the work realm, from family ties and friendship groups. Community has meant different groups at different times: women in Labour, local groups, school governorship, development issues. I have felt what Marquand describes the champions of the public domain feeling,

They are motivated, at least in part, and for some of the time, by a sense of service and of civic duty (2004, p. 91).

Marquand offers propositions for a public philosophy which include this belief about public interest,

A vigorous and extensive public domain is fundamental to a civilized society (2004, p. 134).

Does every activity count as volunteering that is not paid work? In that case perhaps delivering political leaflets at elections is voluntary work although it does not involve holding a position with any organisation and I have done this all my adult life. Perhaps that is more an interest. Does voluntary work have to be sustained and successful? Some of my efforts never came to fruition at all as the voluntary organisation never got established which was the case for a community newspaper in London's Docklands and a mental health project in Shropshire. Putnam (2000) in his exhaustive survey of community mindedness in the USA, includes any sort of participation in groups of any kind, not just active engagement, in his description of social capital, including any interest in an activity,

Voting and following politics are relatively undemanding forms of participation. In fact, they are not strictly speaking, forms of social capital at all, because they can be done utterly alone (Ibid., p. 37).

Perhaps more difficult to answer is the question of how we judge success on a school governing body. An outstanding Ofsted grade is more down to the staff and leadership team, although we can feel that things are going well generally rather than that things are a struggle.

There has been a tension between feeling it was not important enough for me to spend time on to recognising that it was a good fit with my skills in terms of the roles I was

fulfilling, that of performing in meetings and when chairing; team player with a small inner group; and mentor to the Head. The Head has talked about the mixture of challenge and support from excellent governors. Compartmentalising the different roles recalls Goffman's identifying of our ability to swap in and out of social roles (Goffman, 1959).

Being a volunteer is part of how I define myself to myself because it feels important to have a life over and above just survival and self-interest. It feels as though it is a duty, but a duty that I welcome. It gives my life a meaning along with my work and my relationships and my humanistic view of life tells me that this life is all there is. I don't have any other place or time to do anything to appease my muscular social conscience, just here and now and I know how short life can be after both my adored older brother and a close friend died relatively young.

A thread of this inheritance runs through all of my siblings (I am the youngest of six children) but I seem to have a big dose of it. The combination of this inherited motivation to do good meant that when I started working in the private sector, aged 25, running a restaurant with my brother, I wanted to obtain more balance in my life by doing some community work, and I had the time to do so, as restaurant work meant that I had some daytime hours available. Other people with a full-time job, a business to establish, a live-in boyfriend and a full life, wouldn't have bothered though, so there must be something in my specific combination of inheritance and circumstance that set me off on this road.

I became experienced in this role after I first became a school governor in London on a full-time post-graduate course to be a careers adviser in 1985. At that time, political parties nominated representatives to sit on public bodies and my post represented The Labour Party. Although brought up in the Labour fold, I had only just joined the Party and wanted to be active in support of it locally. I was told that being a school governor would be a way of using my abilities and skills to contribute to the local community (inner London) in the name of Labour and that the Party was always short of volunteers to be school governors. I was working in the education sector in my training so it all fitted. It did not turn out to be a particularly rewarding experience as there were limited opportunities to become familiar with the school and my contact always felt episodic and fleeting. The school was struggling and had a difficult and distinct catchment area of white working class girls. My most valuable contribution was to sit on selection

panels for new teachers to try and get the most motivated and able new recruits on board.

I also stood as a local Labour Councillor, twice, and was narrowly beaten both times. At around the same time, another opportunity to further Labour's aims arose when I attended a training course for Labour Women interested in standing for parliament. I was not interested in the public realm myself, but I was keen to help those who were. Meeting the four highly impressive key members of the Labour Women's Network which had just launched, impressed me so much that I offered to join with this voluntary group on the spot to help design and run training courses for the organisation. This felt like a way to be with kindred spirits within the Labour family, doing important work in changing the face of politics through making a difference to many individual women who went on to be MPs for the Party. One of our achievements was helping campaign for all-women shortlists for Parliamentary selections which brought many more Labour women in to the House of Commons. My involvement with this group continued for twenty years.

Over the years I have been refining how I want to offer my voluntary work. I am better being a big fish in a small pond (Chair of governors in a small school) or a key member of a committee (Labour Women's Network) so that I minimise my frustration at not being able to achieve as much as I would like and maximise my sense of belonging. If I don't feel that I can have influence in decision-making, I am not happy. I don't mind not winning every dispute, just that I want to be heard as I think I know things of use. It has to be an organisation in whose aims and values I believe e.g. a state school, development charity. It also has to fit into my life without causing me too much stress. There have been stressful periods during my time as a governor, particularly as the Chair of governors where I had to be the public face of decisions that had been made collectively. I had a couple of public meetings that were decidedly uncomfortable and contentious but they felt like important contributions to make at the time for the success of the school and because it appeared to be the best decision for the pupils. To Honneth (1995), this would be an example of the struggle for recognition by the key audience of the local community. There and then, no respect was evident; in the long term, peaceful relations were restored.

The fact remains that community involvement across the board is declining and with governors in particular. At any one time there are many unfilled vacancies for school

governors in the UK and James and Goodall (2014) highlight the need for better recruitment of governors. The difficulty of recruiting governors applies across all settings and it undermines the overall effectiveness of many governing bodies and school governing generally. The execution of the role is both shaped by how they perceive themselves, however explicitly or tacitly this may be expressed, and in turn, shapes them beyond their involvement as governors, through the experience of being a governor itself. One school governor recounted that the experience had completely changed her life. She had been distressed at hearing about the children in the care of the local authority, who were experiencing difficulties at the school where she was a governor. As a direct result of this, she and her husband made the decision to adopt a child to give a loving home to an otherwise unwanted young person.

h) Conclusion

Which factors emerge as important in my decision to become and remain a governor and how can these be theorised? As I write I edit to select only relevant issues and events and to screen out anything too revealing or intimate. A sense of personal preservation and privacy means I gloss over more traumatic incidents and group together similar issues. Any storying of this type is both temporal and situated, partial and précised. What I write today may be different if I am writing it next year. The view from here shifts and alters on each retelling. Illeris' (2014) notion of the core identity seems relevant as I depict myself as someone with an inner drive to relate to others in the community and can exhibit a confident approach to taking a lead. My outer layers of experience and relationships are rooted in the influence of my parents.

Oakley (1984) highlights this,

It is in families that our personalities are formed, smooth or scarred, and obeisance to parental power, or its opposite, is with us all our lives (1984, p. 84).

It is remarkable how much I have both absorbed their influences and inherited aspects of their characters. I don't like fuss or need formal recognition for what I do because those values are so ingrained in me. Money, beyond being able to survive, is not a motivator for me and I feel positively de-motivated by a life with no other meaning than transactions. The volunteering I do is to make lives better and to try and change the world. The work as a governor can be dispiriting when there is a lot of conflict and I am always very aware that I do not have to maintain the voluntary commitment. I have a

sense of ambivalence about how useful the work is at times, and specifically whether it needs me to be doing it. This continual ambivalence towards the role of a school governor, which was a role I did not explicitly seek out but returned to partly as a result of happenstance, is now quite clear. Governing is essentially a maintaining role of a community institution, not my normal preferred activity of a more radical agenda. By choice I would be working to fight poverty, increase opportunities or challenge inequality in some way according to my inherited and deeply-held values. When I was most enthusiastic about the governing role was when we were asked by the local authority to set up another school in a poorer area – being able to spread excellent education to a less advantaged catchment area motivated me more than just maintaining the status quo.

I enjoy working with individuals to recognise and support them as Irene did and I did a lot of training of lay union members in the past, foregoing a larger salary for this more rewarding work as my father did – I charged the trade unions half the price for my services as my way of redistributing income. I worked with dinner ladies and public service workers who had never given a presentation before, to empower them to speak in public at a union national conference for example – an almost exact copy of my father's work a generation earlier. Bill Morris, General Secretary of the TGWU once told me that my father, who taught him on one of the Cirencester shop stewards' summer schools, was the first person who had taken his ambitions in the union seriously. Bill credited Tony with being an important part of his career success when he became the first black leader of the largest trade union in the UK. Both my parents believed in the power of education to transform an individual's life chances, outlook and satisfaction in life and that is my motivation with being a school governor. I believe state education should be outstanding for all pupils. I write books that help people who are struggling to find work, not books like Tony's about inequalities in the workplace, but perhaps the modern equivalent in this current more individualistic cultural context.

I started this auto/biographical exercise crediting my family background at a superficial level as important but also claiming that auto/biographical influences are very hard to illuminate. I was the main carer for both my parents at the end of their lives and the last decade of my father's life was blighted by dementia which cruelly robbed him of his personality and intellect. My mother did not have a long period of illness before her death but with both of them I had swapped the previous role of child, then as friend, with that of being their carer and they were my patients. As I wrote this chapter they

both, but especially Tony, returned to me as my parents and I was moved to the point of tears to think about their lives when they were in their prime; they seemed to be such principled and impressive people and their indefatigable drive to affect change was remarkable. I admire their dogged pursuit of their ideals and zeal for their causes and their humanity. Tony in particular was very resilient. His career had several set-backs, often due to his own principled stand on some issue or another or his innocence about others' motives, but he always bounced back and on to the next innovative, radical project because he was focused and driven by his values on work issues. Loving and idealistic, always optimistic and hardworking, caring and positive in their outlook for a better world, they built up, through the words of Honneth (1995),

...the affectional relationship between parents and children within the family. . . . Since, moreover, needs and emotions can, to a certain extent, only gain 'confirmation' by being directly satisfied or reciprocated, recognition itself must possess the character of affective approval or encouragement (1995, p. 95).

Honneth builds on Hegel's description of love as, *being oneself in another* (1995, p. 96). Considering this, I can see that I am now, in turn, **being another in myself** as I am channeling many aspects of both my parents individually and their combined influence upon me. Although they were both strong characters, their focus on their work and supporting social causes meant that they were outward-looking and did not provide a smothering atmosphere in the house. As the last of six children, I was left to my own devices a lot, sometimes too much, so as well as having an innate self-confidence, I also successfully developed,

....primary affectional relationships as depending on a precarious balance between independence and attachment (Ibid., p. 96).

I was able to assert myself and develop my own experiences as separate and distinct from that of my parents and especially from that of my mother, whilst being confident in her, and their, warm approval and demonstrable love. That inner confidence has enabled me to be resilient in the face of life's difficulties, problems and traumas which later beset me.

Not only has my career echoed theirs, my motivation for volunteering and community engagement directly flows from them, and the people I seek out, admire and want to be close to also exhibit those characteristics of being value-driven, humanistic, left-leaning

crusaders who are rational non-believers with emotional intelligence. This strong inner self-confidence that my loving childhood had endowed me with, did mean that I was primed to be able to easily harness the self-esteem to join in with organisations as a volunteer, feeling confident about the contribution I could make. It also means that I am a recogniser of others and can be sensitive to those who are not so confident.

In my paid work I am conscious of articulating the positive contribution that others are making and I see on a daily basis how this transforms people who are otherwise struggling for lack of any recognition. The drive and motivation to create a more just world is the strongest of my inherited values and that trumps the need for formal recognition for myself. My 'no fuss' upbringing means that my motivation for supporting a cause is satisfaction and gratification enough and I do not seek any formal acknowledgement from my community (Honneth, 1995, p. xii). I have often identified an inner conflict of feeling frustrated at not having achieved enough whilst at the same time also being positive about how well I am doing. This seems to be a clear inheritance from each of Tony and Irene respectively, showing itself in my character. Like Irene, I am quick to look on the bright side and like Tony, I bounce back and venture forth to the next challenge. But like both of them, I know there is still much to be done.

Chapter 8: FINDINGS AND ISSUES ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH

Chapter 8: Findings and issues arising from the research.

a) **Introduction**

This chapter picks up the key **issues** that arose as a result of the auto/biographic methodology used in this thesis. Although the outline of the methodology used was fully described in Chapter 3, there were several topics which emerged during the interviewing, in the analysis and when creating the narrative chapters which demanded more reflection. These issues were unknown before the research and presented various challenges that needed to be discussed and worked through in the creation of the thesis.

The chapter then proceeds to collect together the main threads from all the narrative chapters to present and discuss the perceptions and **findings** of the research in terms of the rich knowledge and insights that have emerged from this research. Each narrative has outlined the individual stories and here I describe the links between them in terms of the original research questions regarding the motivation of school governors and civic engagement. An analysis of my **growth as a reflexive researcher** is highlighted, identifying my theoretical position and the **development of my professional identity** and the implications for my practice follow on. The **conclusion** summarises these issues and findings.

The gathering of life stories and the responsibility for analysing and presenting them, coupled with the auto/biographic element of the approach, elevated several aspects as a result of the complexity of their use. These aspects demanded a fuller investigation in order to provide a rigorous understanding of the implications and limitations of using such a lens. Additionally the issue of working with friends as research participants gave rise to complications in terms of ethics which were difficult to reconcile. The need for immersion in the material leading to understanding and self-discovery was a methodological outcome which had ramifications related to how we know how to analyse the material that we have. Writing as access point to enquiry and the use of other creative approaches such as using fiction deserved more attention as key aspects of the research.

These issues of confidentiality, ways of knowing, daring to analyse, using fiction and playing creatively with and around the material, all occurred to me after the research had started and their significance became clearer as I worked at understanding the material I had gathered. Explaining them in the Methodology chapter would have been

a clumsy way of sharing their importance as they needed more space to be fully explored. I wanted to mark them out as issues that appeared and evolved as the research progressed and as worthy of further consideration and explanation.

b) Issues

Auto/biography

Methodologically, there is a wider relevance of the auto/biographical methods that have been used. Without doubt the in-depth interviews enable a wealth of information to be uncovered. There is in any long interview, a sense of discovery and shared reflection which can reveal the emotional depths behind the material. Immersion in the life story necessarily means that the participant is focused on her own story and able to be fully reflexive both in the details and in how she constructs that which is shared.

Allowing issues and concerns their space, developing directly from the narrative chapters as ways of knowing what the key issues were emerging from the material, sounds straightforward, but requires time and attention to let the salient points appear. Interview questions were framed leaving the answers open to allow choice from the participant in how they constructed their responses. Appendix III shows in the transcript extract provided, the almost stream of consciousness in reply to open questions. Hardly pausing for breath, the participant was happy to speak in a monologue as she travelled back in time describing her home life and earlier career. In this way her narrative was directly her own thoughts and choice of priorities for communication. In her descriptions she hardly took any account of the other in the room, I as the interviewer faded into the background as she was in charge of telling her story.

Layered on top of the individual's access to his or her own story, is the issue of how much has been influenced by the interviewer in its formation and on top of that is the question of what sort of analysis has been made. After the interviews were completed, third parties unrelated to my research, told me about situations, about which I had heard during the interviews, which conveyed judgements about outcomes that were at direct variance to my participants' views. These third party opinions occurred years later than the events described by my participants, but it was unsettling to hear a directly contradictory view concerning a subject about which I was writing. It emphasised heavily the totally partial nature of narrative, that which is known and told, that we see an issue through our own eyes and the telling of a particular story is only ever reflecting

that view. Somebody else can have an opposite view of the same events. What can be a success to one person can appear as a failure to another.

Does this make narrative unreliable? It is surely partial, processed, packaged, filtered and added to by the narrator. The implication for my research was clear, my material is testimony from my participants about the history and story of their involvement in governing as they experienced it. This does not mean that they would have seen and experienced previous incidents as being the same as others did. Testimony is inevitably personal and partial and can change and vary substantially over time as experiences and how those experiences are told to others, hence the longitudinal element of my research to capture any changes over a year.

Arendt's (2005) reporting and interpretation of the Eichmann trial of the early 1960s identified some of the unacknowledged issues which related to the Holocaust and arose from the Nuremberg Trials of Nazis; those of complicity and collusion and the multiple and various 'truths' of all those involved (Arendt, 2005). Langer's (1991) provocative exploration of the complex and conflicting memories of the Holocaust demonstrates that words push meanings to polarities and humans seek straightforward explanations of the period, together with a need for the positive lure of narratives of redemption, recovery and hope.

Friendly complications

Prior friendships can involve conspiracies of silence and avoidance as well as intimacy and the nature of the complexity does not end with the personal involvement of gathering interview material. More complex considerations arise around the process of writing and presenting the material. My dilemmas around working with friends started with the initial clash of roles: from the early awkwardness of establishing a researching relationship with someone who was an old friend (see Kay's narrative in Chapter 4, for a full description), and progressed to a growing unease about where the boundaries lay between that friendship and the research. There were many 'unknown knowns' I realised once the interview process started – those things about Kay that did not arise from the research interviews themselves but which I already knew and that I subliminally brought to bear. She began telling me her story many years before the research interviews began and my knowledge of it carried on throughout.

There were issues about the gross difficulty of unknowing what I knew in order to leave the reporting just to the material arising from the interviews. But why should I do this when it was practically impossible to enact and could be seen as more untruthful? Previous confidences and shared experiences meant that I had been privy to many of Kay's most private innermost thoughts and opinions about her life which caused me great difficulty in detaching them from her story of governorship. This meant that any conclusions I was drawing were based on more than the material from her interviews and no ethical consent had been sought or obtained to draw on years of earlier confidences.

Ascribing reasons to her behaviour and analysis for her motivation was indubitably informed by my long knowledge of her, her background, her family, her life in total. The ethics of working with friends and of representing lives is more onerous than doing the same with strangers. Although we may get to know participants as a result of the research work, and there are ethical concerns about to what extent we can and should ascribe definitive causes and reasons to their behaviour, the issue is magnified with friends. I found it problematic to block out previous confidences that Kay had shared with me which led to more far-reaching conclusions than those I could have known otherwise. It is a quandary enough to what extent we should pontificate about the lives of others by dint of them sharing their narratives with us as Clough explored in his startling story of "Lolly", the brother of a wronged research participant who visits the researcher bent on vengeance (2006, p. 54).

I also felt discomfort and unease several times when talking about this participant during supervision sessions. This was because I was reluctant to divulge some very personal knowledge of her life with my supervisors which had not arisen from my research but from before it started. My unease came from a sense of being unfairly privileged with an insider's knowledge or a fellow traveller's insights besides the interview material. My discomfort was about forming judgements for the final document that could be seen as disquieting at best or hurtful at worst. Could I talk about disappointment and failure in relation to my participants without betraying confidences or wounding my friend by alluding to those almost unsayable topics rarely raised between us? I was conscious of a desire to defend my friend's prior confidences.

More recently, Tillman (2015) has explored friendship explicitly as a method in and of itself. Initially intrigued by the concept, I was disappointed in the over-simplicity of the idea that:

Like romantic and family relationships, friendship is an interpersonal bond characterised by the ongoing communicative management of dialectical tensions, such as those between affection and instrumentality, expressiveness and protectiveness, and judgement and acceptance (2015, p. 1).

Being able to rely on a shared experience and stories mean that common shortcuts and unspoken understandings exist. Crucially, this leaves out the *non-management* of such tensions or avoidance which I would argue is an inherent part of any long-term association. In describing the absence of obligatory dimensions which characterise such relationships, Tillman ignores this lack of regulation and conformity in her analysis (2015, p. 2). In arguing that fieldwork and friendship share commonalities, Tillman aims to increase the significance of politics and values when she evidences studies which overtly blur the lines of friendship and researcher. For her, research is friendship and friendships are her research forum, which must partly relate to the needs of the researcher for close relationships and depth of contact.

Tillman also raises the difficulties over conflicts of interests,

... due to our deep and sustained involvement, we may be told secrets that would add significant layers to our accounts. Even with non-privileged information, the dual role of friend/researcher makes it difficult to decide what to divulge, especially regarding information that potentially discredits our participants (2015, p. 18).

Needing to be clear about the nature of the relationship, its changes over time and the impact it can have on the research and the way the research is presented is crucial but Tillman's arguments for re-framing research as friendship may limit that clarity rather than illuminate it. Some writers have taken this further, Sassi and Thomas (2012) draw on Tillman's work to extend its significance to the act of mentorship. They agree that a weakness of the approach is the blurring of the power imbalances involved in the research activity. Their use of an involved co-mentoring relationship they felt led to a deeper and more impactful legacy of the research. But it could be argued that more rigorous and demanding standards could have been applied if a less close relationship had existed. Events would be considered afresh, untainted by previous patterns or

emotional muscle memory. It could also make a major difference to the conclusions drawn about individuals and their narratives.

Creative approaches

In the methodological search for authenticity of seeing, Cartlidge describes how Winnicott constantly stressed the link between playing, creativity and more confident selves (2012, p. 101). My use of imaginative methods to stimulate ideas and provide new lenses through which to consider my material resulted in various forays into the creative realm. I compiled a collage to represent myself which I found a delightful experience, taking me back to the simplicity of primary school activities to use materials other than words to tell a story. I have since used the technique with others to free up existing boundaries around depicting ourselves. I was in a University workshop which took us through sketching scenes to represent childhood experiences. With my research, I generated third-party representations of meeting my participants, one was rather like a screen play and one took the form of a prologue. I extensively used writing as enquiry through my journals, completed almost daily at points, to reflect on my learning journey and take stock of my progress and I drew colourful mind maps to harness and foreground my ideas. I accessed old family photographs and pictures to aid reflections about my childhood and family life and referred to old songs and works of literature that had some adjunctive meaning for my work. Latterly I even composed a nine-stanza comic poem about the ups and downs of the PhD process. The different mental processes which tune in for this kind of activity are not just helpful for freeing up the mind of the researcher but are positively therapeutic, playing around with visual stimulæ and colourful sights to add a different appreciative dimension. It is also a varied launching point for working with others to involve them in the research aspects being played with, which in turn can stimulate more possibilities.

Ethical considerations

As far as the ethics of this kind of auto/biography are concerned, one big area is the inability to disguise people and issues because of the small sample sizes. There are two issues here. One is the virtual impossibility of totally disguising someone, particularly with in-depth interviews where many small details of a life are provided, even if all names are changed. It becomes much easier to identify the place, the people and the action being presented. Perhaps more importantly, the subject of the material will be quite clear that this is his/her story on re-reading it and the treatment of it. This can be a

great inhibitor of full analysis of the story and I found this caused me great difficulty at every stage of my research with all the participants but particularly with the close friend. From self-editing my thoughts in supervision sessions to the disguising and forgetting some of the private information that I already knew about the person, to deciding how far to speculate about motives, challenges and difficulties faced by that participant, I was constrained by the fact that my words could be experienced as hurtful, accusatory or invasive if read by the subject at a later stage.

It can be difficult sharing our conclusions about others' motivations and drivers when it implies they look more selfish than altruistic. Clough powerfully dramatises this sensitivity to illustrate the complex emotions involved. Imagining a scene after a research project has ended, he created a violent stand-off between the interviewee's angry brother and the researcher, where some unforeseen and tragic consequences of the research are revealed and laid bare in a shocking confrontation (Clough, 2002, p. 54). Although this story is fictional, Clough's point is that ethical concerns, the truth about our narratives and confidentiality are all areas for careful consideration, caution and even struggle (Ibid., p. 80).

Josselson (1996) writes with feeling about the weighty responsibility of committing opinions to the written page, as they form a historical judgement that cannot be undone,

Written events gain a substantiality above that carried by memory or speech. Although narrative researchers have begun to explore the ways in which our exchange with participants in the interactional phase of our research may affect those who share their lives with us, we have paid less attention to how what we write down may affect those about whom we write. And although we recognize that our hypotheses and conclusions about people originate in our own complex conceptual processes, we often lose sight of the additional authority our words and ideas carry when transferred to the permanence of print (1996, p. 60).

Citing Stacy, Josselson (1996) raises the issue of whether the act of researching, particularly that which involves a close relationship with the participants, in itself can be exploitative (1996, p. 61). She goes on to discuss how working with known others, *I had thought, made it likely that I could have open, honest conversation with them about how it felt to have been written about* (1996, p. 62). Trying to discuss this process with her participants, Josselson admits to feeling discomfort, which felt like some mixture of shame, guilt, and dread (Ibid., p. 63).

Josselson adds,

Inevitably, what we take into our possession as we collect people's life stories is people's narcissistic experience of themselves (1996, p. 64).

This can lead to a powerful feeling of affirmation once the narrative is in print and in the same way can create great disappointment about what has been left out or about what has been included that was unwelcome. The variation between self-perception from the inside and that of others' from the outside can be very different.

The permission obtained from participants is to have interviews, not to be analysed as individuals as we strive to make meaning from the material and search for satisfactory 'findings'. She concludes,

To renarrate a life unasked, therefore, robs the Other of a piece of his or her freedom no matter how exhilarating an experience it may be (1996, p. 67).

There is always the dread, guilt and shame that go with writing about others . . . The dread is easiest to trace. There is always the dread that I will have harmed someone, that I will be confronted with, "How could you say that about me?" (1996, p. 69).

Josselson (2011) also identifies feelings of guilt from using the intimate details shared in an interview with the resulting audience of readers, and further, from using the material to pursue an academic career which makes her feel like a "betrayal". Promoting the idea that narrative research is something that we must "anguish" over, she concludes that it is in this uncomfortable questioning of the work that we respect our participants and contain our less honourable traits such as self-aggrandisement on the backs of others' stories.

Josselson (2011) finishes with,

*When we write about others, we entangle ourselves in others' intricately woven narcissistic tapestries as well as our own. . . . We write, as scholars, **for** our peers **about** our participants. How can we keep the distinction between a focus on the person and a focus on a phenomenon or process separate when they are intertwined? This is both a distinction in terms of our understanding of what we are doing and an ethical question. We have to hold this doubleness at all levels. [Original emphasis.] (2011, p. 46).*

If we add in the added complication of researching our friends, this is another layer of complexity, more like a *tripleness* to continue Josselson's description.

Chase in Josselson (1996) describes the challenge of writing about a small number of participants in depth and the implications of such a spotlight,

We often select a small group of stories from a larger collection to serve as examples of the processes we want to study, and in our writing, we present those examples fully to demonstrate the relationship between specific stories and the cultural context. Thus research participants easily recognize themselves in our texts and readers who know them may recognize them, too, even when pseudonyms and other forms of disguise are used.

By contrast, readers of texts based on conventional methods of qualitative analysis are unlikely to be able to identify research participants – indeed, participants may not even recognize themselves ... because sociologists usually dissect individual interviews into pieces, looking for patterns across the entire set ..., and they write about general themes that they demonstrate through a series of brief interview excerpts.

The extensive use of individuals' stories in narrative research clearly renders participants more vulnerable to exposure than conventional qualitative studies do. In turn, this greater vulnerability makes more acute the question of who should control the interpretive process. (1996, p. 45).

I decided at the writing stage not to include the interview material from Stephen, my fourth governor. There was a danger of duplication between his and Alison's interview themes and I preferred to have more analysis of fewer interviews in order to cover different ground. In getting ethical clearance from my participants, I only committed to interviewing them for research purposes so there was no promise of using any particular material in the finished thesis (See Appendix II).

Because of my interviewing skills, my participants were more interested in the process of the interviews themselves as spaces for reflection and some reflexivity. Any initial conclusions I was drawing were discussed in the sessions themselves and the conclusions drawn were shared at the time. I made no promises about their specific experiences being written about or taken any further beyond carrying out the interview appointments and what I was going to do with the stories they told was going to be up

to me, although I gave assurances that that names, places and schools would all be given pseudonyms. In fact the assumption was that the interviews represented the beginning and end of the research for the participants and indeed, at the stage of conducting the interviews, I had no clear thoughts about how the resulting thesis would even be shaped, never mind what it would contain and before the interview, there was no way I could have had any idea of the information that would emerge. It is in practice impossible to get ethical clearance for unknown outcomes.

c) Findings

There are rich knowledge and insights that have emerged from this research in relation to the motivation of school governors as an example of civic engagement. The knowledge and insights relate to the psychosocial framing around motivation. Sometimes construed as a simple topic of enquiry with one answer such as: 'To promote the interests of a child in the school' or: 'To enhance a CV', a more realistic understanding of motivation leads to the highly complex mix of psychological and sociological factors at play. It may be that there are presented reasons for joining a governing body but there will indubitably also be deeper-seated reasons which concern the individual and her needs and goals from engagement with such voluntary activity.

In terms of a theory of motivation we can identify the role of a struggle for the agentic self in which people are engaged. From childhood we learn to act for ourselves, making choices and relating to others. Voluntary roles such as governing can provide another outlet for satisfaction and recognition which can aid our own authorship of a life, which can be enlivened by processes of self and other recognition. This could be even more true if in combination with a less satisfying remunerated career.

The issue of resilience also arises in terms of the ability to withstand and recover from difficulties and disappointment (Hoult, 2012). Honneth's work, building on Winnicott's analysis of early child development and Freud's writing on early loving relationships, points out that the pattern and capacity to be successfully and respectfully involved with other people is set down in early upbringing. Successful relationships of this kind do not imply that there are never difficulties or setbacks of course. Possessing the strength of character to be able to cope with the conflicts that arise from differences in personal life and the public agora is a product of a secure and open personality. Fighting for a point of view or for a vote for a certain policy is an extension of 'being heard'. The chutzpah to take the floor and articulate views even if they may not be popular, through a sense of

vision and commitment requires a strong sense of self, what Honneth calls self-confidence or self-love. Early influences of being given both love and the space and encouragement to grow to independent thought and action, separate from the parent, result in a citizen with the poise and self-belief to participate in this way.

Recognition

Honneth (1995), argued that successful membership of social groups comes from three different levels of recognition in society, each level is defined by different types of needs and expectations being satisfied. For an adult to develop self-confidence, the first level requires love from caregivers from infancy, which is what Winnicott (1971) called a sense of self. For Honneth, self-confidence came from having relationships where one is valued for being oneself. If one experiences love and warmth, one develops the ability to love oneself and others. This sense of self-confidence underpins the core of identity forged by this loving recognition, if we can receive it from others early in our lives (Honneth, 1995, p. 118). With my participants' material there seemed to be a link between an inner confidence and the experience of being a governor. Joining a group of strangers to become one of their peers requires a strong identity and presence to assume the necessary level of equality and scope for contributing.

The second level of recognition is self-respect, where a person is part of a community and is recognised as an individual with rights. Respect is shown to others by acknowledging them as equals who can co-operate together harmoniously and in a mature fashion to positive purpose. As a result, a person has the ability to participate in the mechanisms and discussions pertaining to community institutions, such as the school with its governing body (Ibid., p. 129). Receiving honours from a community leads to the third and highest level of recognition, that of self-esteem. People with high self-esteem will reciprocate a mutual and overt acknowledgement of each other's contribution to the community which then perpetuates a feeling of loyalty and thus social solidarity (Ibid., p. 128).

Being part of a governing body can provide a place to be recognised with respectful relationships, rights and duties expected and received, and esteem conveyed. The narratives of Thomas and Alison illustrate this kind of reciprocal recognition. But this is only if all is working well and participation is enjoined in a constructive manner. In Kay's chapter, the respect she felt she deserved was not forthcoming. Whether this was

through a sense at the school that she did not respect the school enough it is difficult to say.

The process of doing research can in itself provide a space where recognition can take place. Participating in research can serve as a transitional experiment, which is a space to understand oneself and to be recognised in the eyes of a significant other, which a researcher may become if trusted and respected as one who listens. One participant, Alison, remarked that she had found the whole experience useful as a way of thinking through for herself about her own motivation to be a governor. Even more marked, in my interview with Kay, she made explicit that she had felt listened to and valued for her attempts at governorship. This was in the context of a fairly unsuccessful stint as a governor where she had not felt validated by the governing body. In being able to talk through, and by talking, she felt able to almost 'see' how hard she had tried to be constructive and positive, she felt that she was being recognised for her value and potential. It had the effect of offsetting or de-personalising the rejection she felt she had experienced and helped her to feel that it was not necessarily due to any fault of her own.

Habitus

Bourdieu's work on an individual's sense of place is directly relevant to the experience of new governors. Becoming a governor entails entering a closed group with a history, ways of working and communicating and specific terminology that can be off-putting, if not alienating, to the uninitiated. In my experience explanation of process and performance are not often included in any induction for new governors. Bourdieu reveals why moving into new roles can be so problematic, even traumatic, and can put up insurmountable barriers to those without the experience and confidence to surmount them (Bourdieu, 1988).

Thomas mentioned it overtly as an element that caused him *fear* when he first joined the governing body. The jargon, initials and educational capital that exist in a school, and specifically on a board with its elements of business terminology, bureaucratic practice and manner of speaking, can be very alienating to those for whom it is a new and mystifying world (Grenfell, 2012). The middle class milieu can be an exclusive arena which can bewilder and distance those for whom it is an unknown habitus (Bourdieu, 1988).

Feminism

At least two of the participants referenced issues around a feminist agenda either overtly or obliquely. Alison expressly came into governing as a way of reclaiming a space for herself beyond bringing up her children, after having left full-time work. As a professional in the business world she knew she had skills and talents that were not being used in childcare and she gradually came to see how she could offer this to the school. She was a reading volunteer in a school and was approached to be a governor as a way of playing a more substantial role. This is quite a common way in, as Heads and other members of the senior school team are often in a position to spot any parents who communicate positively about the school and who have time to spend on school affairs. In this way Heads may be picking out those with the necessary self-confidence and assertiveness to function well as a governor. Putnam also highlights the common nature of volunteers being recruited to the role by being asked directly (Putnam, 2000). Alison obviously did find the experience very satisfying and she quickly became Chair, ready, capable and willing to organise the governing body. In effect, governing was a substitute for her forsaken career.

Kay's routine was dominated by looking after her son John, a responsibility that had markedly affected her life. Her husband worked and although she had part-time work, she was the partner who willingly spent part of each day taking John to and from his special school and keeping him company. Such domestic responsibility was a product of the logistical difficulties of caring for a special needs son where all the day care had to be undertaken by the parents of the child. He needed to be driven to and from school which was a considerable distance away from his home; it made sense for Kay's husband to work full-time as he could earn more than Kay; because of his autism John did not play with other children so there was no network of peers built up to help provide any kind of support. This intensive level of care would also need to be life-long.

In terms of my own auto/biography, I found it difficult to assess whether there were any live issues around feminism. Brought up as a feminist mother and socialist father, it was always just a truism for me and my family that men and women should have equal rights, pay, opportunities and access to resources such as education, health and the political levers. I have brought up my children as a single parent as my marriage ended just after I became pregnant with my youngest child. I have maintained an amicable relationship with my ex-husband over the years and he and his subsequent family live

two streets away. My career did suffer through working part-time when my children were young but this sacrifice was willingly undertaken as at the same time I also thoroughly enjoyed the experience, having had my children quite late in life. I have not experienced outright discrimination and although I don't say the war is over, I don't feel actively oppressed and to a large extent I control my own work environment as I am self-employed. I am aware of the battles that have been won for equal pay through the trade unions and reformers, for voting and abortion rights and childcare and with laws to reduce violence against women. So my feminist principles are more oriented to the plight of women abroad than in the UK unless there is a crisis at home when existing rights are under threat. With a daughter aged 21 and a son of 19, I am fascinated by their take on sexual politics and feminism. My son was a proud founder member of the feminist discussion group at his school sixth form for instance and my daughter regularly reminds me of the gendered nature of societal assumptions.

I have fought for feminist causes most of my life. Through the 1990s I was a key activist in a group called Labour Women's Network which encouraged women to put themselves forward to be Labour candidates at local and national level. I trained these potential candidates in public speaking and campaigning skills. Many of them went on to become Labour politicians in due course and this was happening just when, in the face of fierce Labour and wider opposition, in 1993 all-women shortlists were introduced in the Labour Party so there were suddenly a lot more openings for female Labour candidates. The situation changed from there being more male MPs called John in the House of Commons than there were women MPs, to a situation where half of all seats calculated as winnable by Labour were reserved for women in the 1997 general election. A winnable seat meant that it would only require a 6% swing to Labour to be won. Out of those 38 all-women-shortlisted winnable seats, 35 women were elected, taking the number of female Labour MPs to over 100, which represented heady times for Labour women. Despite the controversy of the original decision, the shortlists represented great strides to increasing women's representation in the UK parliament after years of no change. It helped break down prejudices against female candidates and meant a shift in the issues and practices put forward in the House of Commons and encouraged it to become more female-friendly.

When I was involved in my professional association in the 1990s (the Institute of Careers Guidance), as a feminist I was shocked at how few female national Presidents there had been in its history considering careers advice was such a female-dominated

profession. This fact made me determined to put myself forward to election to break the logjam and I was pleased to win a contested election to become voluntary President for a four-year term (unpaid) where I worked with a female Chief Executive. I was then succeeded by two more women whom I had respectively groomed for the role of President by mentoring them, suggesting they stand and supporting them in post: truly keen to be a queen-maker – focused on breaking down these barriers to equal representation. Gratifyingly, there have been a stream of female Presidents since then.

In terms of governance, there are more women than men on school governing bodies although it is often men who become Chair. I took the Chair within a year of becoming a governor as the previous incumbent had been casting around for someone to hand over to and I turned up at the right time, appearing to be both someone who shared his views and a safe pair of hands. As one of the more senior trustees I consider it a responsibility for paying attention to careful management of the process of the meetings so that women, and indeed all governors, feel included, fully recognised and encouraged to contribute.

Implications for policy and practice

The ramifications of these findings for governors are wide and there are certainly practical implications which follow from this research. There are lessons for the way governance works; as much about the way the school treats the governors as the way in which the governors are inducted. There has been little explicit exploration of the motivation of an individual to become a governor although every person who willingly becomes a governor must be motivated in some way. It is not often something that is considered or is prompted to emerge in the normal cycle of meetings and events and room for such reflection must be made. There is work to be done to introduce and make acceptable effective measures to help governors explore their own motivation. The induction for new governors is presently a series of courses run locally, often purchased from the local authority. These induction courses have as their focus the main topics that represent the content of governors' work – financial management, HR roles in school and standards of educational achievement.

In addition to this information given and good practice passed on, it would be helpful to focus on the individuals in the room. Encouraging governors to share their reasons for standing could inculcate a habit of giving more priority to the process of governing, as well as the outcomes. A career path for governors which facilitated their progression

through explicit acknowledgement and demonstration of mutual respect, recognition and esteem would encourage attention to the health of their personal motivation.

The motivation of those taking on voluntary responsibilities should not go unseen or unspoken, either in this generation or those of previous times. By exploring and celebrating the links of today with generations which came before, this one form of narrative research, if actively promulgated can help young people or older adults to become more effective leaders in community development and political action. By giving voice to the school governor, the carer, the trade union representative, the church lay official and the local politician, the role of narration can help inform and develop a new civic awareness and involvement. The life stories of the learning, involvement and connection of those who are players in the new civics, can create a clarion call for a new generational agency. If current governors within schools communicate both the motivations and satisfactions of community engagement it could renew the call to collective action and engagement in today's democratic spaces.

It may be that we can inspire such *forms of human flourishing* which Marquand describes, through foregrounding the connections between our present selves and the political influences that have helped to construct that identity (Marquand, 2004, p. 27). Putnam's insistence on the loss of the 'long civic generation' being the most significant factor in the decline of involvement in the public realm, was due to the spirit of national endeavour and community spirit they had forged throughout the World Wars of the twentieth century. When we ask about the role of narration in developing a new civics, the answer is that it can help us explore and identify our pasts. Life-based research can enhance the real or imagined dialogue between generations and produce new forms of thinking and reflection. This can strengthen community bonds and lead to a renewed understanding of the need for, and call to, action.

As Marquand tells us, ... *the public domain depends on careful and continuing nurture* (2004, p. 2). Governing is a part of the priceless and precarious nature of the public domain which is always at risk according to Marquand who tells us, *Its values and practices do not come naturally and have to be learned.* (Ibid., p. 2). My contention is that we need to actively promulgate these values which requires the conscious telling of tales which underline the significance of and the point of such endeavours.

Biography enables us to discern patterns but also distinctiveness in lives. The relationship between the particular and the general, uniqueness and

commonality, is in fact a central issue in biographical research (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 2).

d) Growth as a reflexive researcher

Immersion in the material arising from the research is an essential part of coming to conclusions. My own story was difficult to fit into this methodology. I was constrained by the same desire in writing about my family influences as I was writing about participants. I wanted the conclusions I came to, to be fair and representative of the story I had constructed. Writing about my own upbringing was difficult to encapsulate and I was concerned about the partiality necessary to select episodes and events to retell. In the end this necessitated the same selectivity of material as it did choosing what to include and highlight for my participants' stories. My early family life was not perfect, nor were my parents paragons, but re-visiting their working lives and characters for my auto/biographical chapter vividly brought home to me their strengths and the striking similarities of my life story with theirs.

My process of discovery through the auto/biographical element of the research demonstrated the level of thought and reflection that has to go into unravelling certain aspects from the past. Mostly we do not dwell on such issues, unless involved with some sort of therapeutic counselling activity where we are encouraged to revisit and thoroughly explore past relationships. It underlined for me the danger of making facile observations about participants based solely on a few hours of interviews. Accordingly, all my comments are light touch, making suggestions about motives and commonalities rather than comprising overly definite pronouncements. I am always aware of the different stories that could be told, and under my sole authorship, no-one challenges my version. *Hey diddle diddle may rank as an idyll if he pronounced it chaste*, from Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Mikado*, neatly encapsulated this power of interpretation (Glinert, 2006).

How do we know our analysis of biographical material is good enough? There is a proper role for doubt and crystallisation provides a balance to the analysis process (see Chapter 3 Methodology for a full explanation). Of my three collaborators, only one perceived a different emphasis to the one at which I had arrived. I did not show my own auto/biography to anyone else as there was no unadorned transcript stage where the story existed without interpretation. It was from the start a combination of story and analysis, albeit self-analysis. It had been suggested that I could arrange for a colleague

to interview me, to create my narrative echoing the process used with my participants. I decided against this on the basis that I wanted to immerse myself in my family background which was easier to do outside of a formal interview. This is a key point as I was happy with my own auto/biography which resulted but even so had qualms about the veracity of my version. Should I also have included and discussed my childhood traumas and travails as well as my secure and loving upbringing? Should I have discussed my parents' foibles and weaknesses as well as their strengths and admirable qualities? In the end my editorial judgement was to focus on those aspects which were most relevant to the volunteering element of my career and to governing in particular.

Becker (2007b) highlights some of the difficulties associated with these types of judgements.

Representing society raises moral questions for participants, for makers and users. These come in several varieties: misrepresentation as a moral wrong; the way common techniques shape our moral judgements; the related questions of assigning praise and blame for the results of action and of casting participants in social action as heroes and villains (Becker, 2007b, p. 129).

Reading my resulting auto/biography, it seemed to be in danger of being smug and self-satisfied, implying a rose-tinted childhood and perfect parenting which was not descriptive of my overall experience, but who could evaluate that for me? I was left to rely on my own selection of pieces of information and choice in sewing the tapestry or bricolage together. My five siblings' views of our childhood are quite different to mine, indeed there is no such thing as 'our' joint childhood, just several different childhoods. Their travails were different dramas and their closeness to my parents of a different shade and order. They grew up in different times and as different individuals with differing perceptions. So these aspects of my own narration illustrate the careful stewardship of my case and life history, specifically selected for their relevance to my experience of governorship. There are many additional stories to be written about my life, all of which I have lived through and which have shaped me. My selection of those aspects to describe were those that seemed the most significant in terms of my motivation to undertake voluntary work as a school governor. I focused on my parents' example and my inheritance of their outlook and values. These same values provided me with the defences and resilience to overcome any later difficulties which followed

but which I omitted from my auto/biography, that self-confidence to which Honneth refers (1995).

Auto/biographical enquiry is a sophisticated development of research methodology to more fully and wholly represent the material being gathered and analysed. It is the adding in of an extra dimension, that of the story of the interviewer/researcher. Rather than the voices of the participants being in a vacuum without tethering or context, the story of the interviewer is foregrounded as an essential ingredient to the mix beyond just stating the researcher's point of view. This is in order to identify the eyes that saw the interview, the interviewer's voice that spoke in the interview and the mind that framed the interpretation, all of which will have substantially influenced the narrative and co-constructed the resulting analysis. What can eventually read as a 'simple' linear narrative once written up, in the making comprises complex attitudes, outlooks and ways of seeing at every point in the process and the decisions involved in reaching the stated conclusions. The body language and facial expressions of the interviewer alone can encourage or discourage particular lines of disclosure. Including the auto/biography of the researcher is no mere solipsistic nicety or conceit but an extension of the comprehension needed to fully interpret the written results. Rather than just the icing on the cake, it is an extension of the understanding necessary to complete the view of the material, to comprehend all the elements that are at work in the co-constructed encounter between researcher and participant. In this way those same judgments may, in turn, be openly and transparently appraised by the reader.

What prompts a particular research question in the first place including the angle at which it is approached? I was considering subjects that could work for my research proposal and wanted to locate this within the broad theme of career, my professional area of work. Governing occurred to me as something I worked on, that as a voluntary activity, was once removed from my direct professional role although still part of my career or working life more generally. It seemed an appropriate area for exploration given it could be informed by my own experience over a decade. However, my choice of title for this thesis needn't have been about motivation at all. It could still have had governing in schools at its heart and have asked about the necessity for governors in schools at all. It could have been about more about the direct work of governors in terms of their effectiveness, or about conflict within the processes and structures and being more of a 'how?' question overall. I could have asked the question differently, looking instead about who chooses to become a governor, a 'who?' question. This

research could have not specified any particular angle, but just been an open-ended enquiry into what experience the participants had had as governors, a ‘what?’ question. The fact that I foregrounded and highlighted motivation is telling. It was asking ‘why?’

No doubt, looking back, this was bringing my own feelings of ambivalence about the activity into the light. I had almost slipped into this activity in recent years and it was not my voluntary activity of choice. I had responded to an other’s initiative, and what with it being convenient and with being flattered at being so in demand to do it, I succumbed. This combination of passivity and shallowness in the way I alighted on such a time-consuming voluntary activity was evident (in retrospect) through my self-analysis whilst doing this research and in turn, no doubt, it contributed to the ambivalence I felt about the activity at times. As a direct result of exploring my own auto/biography I can see now that the choice of research question could have indicated a need in me for a deeper search for understanding the meaning of my own life story. Perhaps I was asking myself that principal question, *What motivated me to become and remain a school governor?*

I did not have elaborate or structured questions to ask each participant but my attitude still emerged from my introduction to each interview where I assumed that some kind of motivation was present. In asking this direct question in the form of, *What motivated you to become and remain a school governor?* I was already foreclosing the option of there being no particular motivation that propelled an individual forward to what I was also assuming they had made as an active choice. This was an example by me of simplistic assumptions being used that there was a definite reason or reasons for their involvement in governorship and that they would be able to easily access this during my two interviews with them. The development of my own story over the course of this thesis showed me that such understanding about oneself can take years to access and interrogate, indeed it is something I feel I have only just begun to grapple with. There is the added issue of how to communicate complex historical and familial influences in mere words to another person, even if one knows what they are. These represent, after all, multifaceted and multi-layered emotional calls and responses and it is no easy task to identify or transpose those feelings into thoughts, let alone translate them into words.

My own case of becoming a governor was more the story of a lazy seduction into the role. No wonder the existing Chair thought he would quickly pass on the chairing crown to me when I arrived, I must have appeared to be sleepwalking into this responsibility,

bumbling into the commitment, and easy-going and compliant about the load I was blithely about to shoulder. I had not really thought it through in terms of the time and effort that was going to be required, because I knew I could do it, which is possibly different though, to actively wanting to do it and seeking it out agentically. I knew I would take on another voluntary role but had not started actively looking for myself when the governorship opening occurred. This implies an extrinsic motivation suggested and required by others, trumping my own active choice and accepted by me rather than resulting from any strong internal motivation of my own. Quite possibly this feeling of being flattered to be asked is a more hidden form of wanting recognition from others.

Volunteer places are difficult to fill in the less glamorous roles such as governing where the activity consists in the main of reading dense materials, exchanging emails and sitting in meetings. However opportunities to be involved in a civic role such as that of a school governor could provide much needed recognition for people and a way of enhancing community solidarity. This is one of the reasons underlying the importance of learning lessons about what prompts people to volunteer for such roles.

e) Development of my professional identity

My own experience of being a school governor is part of my wider career which has always included a volunteer element. As the research evolved, several implications for my careers practice became apparent arising from the theoretical underpinnings. The main one was that of the psychosocial nature of the urge to seek recognition because Honneth's work chimed true so frequently as a factor in my work with my clients. The concept developed by Bourdieu of social capital for entry into new spheres was also relevant as clients often have difficulties adjusting to different cultures when they change jobs. The need to adjust to different roles at work which Goffman outlined was also relevant. In my research bringing up the concept of roles and personas with each research participant struck a chord with them, evidence of Goffman's classic ideas being so accepted. The idea of moving between roles and even personas as we relate to different groups and for different purposes has moved into common parlance since Goffman was writing in the 1960s.

The greatest impact came from Honneth and his ideas on recognition and respect. The significant influence of family and parents is well known in the careers profession and it often merits being considered as an area of interrogation, particularly if people do not

have any ideas about their future, mainly to help understand those influences that have been present in their youth. I would previously think of bringing up family background and place within the family as an enquiry point if there were difficult issues to overcome. Family background often seemed to be important in those cases. As a result of my research work, I now regularly discuss early childhood and family circumstances to air a sense of tone, emotion and habits in the family. I now understand how deeply the lead given in the early years stays with us and guides our later decisions. It can obviously be a factor that we either emulate or repudiate but either way it will have a lasting significance.

In my careers work I had long been aware of the role of the counsellor in providing feedback, appreciation and recognition in terms of articulating the valuing of the client's experiences and achievements, something many clients seem to welcome. Mostly the work is about helping the clients to see for themselves how proud of themselves they should be, getting help to recognise themselves. Since my learning about Honneth, I now explicitly spend time of the issue of self-confidence and to what extent that was imbued in youth; self-respect and how that can be both obtained and passed on and self-esteem and what can lead to this. Many people feel unvalued and using the concept of recognition can be transformatively helpful as a framing device for the discussion. So this research has refreshed my professional working life by giving me many more insights into motivation at all levels as having psychosocial causes. I have permanently changed the way I practise to incorporate this knowledge and intend to write more on this subject as the insights I have gained can only be helpful to other practitioners and clients.

f) Conclusion

Being a governor and other volunteering if successful could be seen to provide satisfaction, recognition or respect for those not receiving it from their work role and life. The centrality of Honneth and Winnicott's alert to the importance of early childhood experiences and the worth of Goffman's role analysis, need to be considered overtly in careers guidance. Future research could include an enquiry into the degree of career significance of the concept of recognition leading to respect.

Chapter 9: CONCLUSION

Chapter 9: Conclusion.

a) Introduction

This research examined the experience of a small sample of governors (including myself) with regard to governorship, specifically asking which factors emerged as important in their motivation to become and remain governors. Their lives were delved into and each divulged their unique repertoire of experience concerning deciding to become a governor and shared how they felt about performing in that role. Situating the research in the landscape and context of the current historical epoch, these experiences were theorised drawing on literature from psychology, sociology and community engagement literature showing that there were issues to confront for each participant about the new role upon which they were embarking. In terms of generating a theory of motivation applying to school governorship as an example of community involvement, it comprises several elements.

b) Significance

The significance of the research into school governance reveals that community interaction can contribute to social solidarity through involvement and engagement with others. The skills needed can be learned through participation in school governance with its discussions, conflicts and compromises offering an arena for social learning. To flourish in these ways, an individual psychologically needs self-confidence. At the micro or individual level there was insight into how people tell their own stories about their motivation. The factors that emerge as important to the research participants were grouped by reference to the three-layer analysis, that of the micro, meso and macro levels. At the micro level an individual's personal development exerts an influence over the activities they choose to pursue. Encouraging participants to reflect on their own personal histories and backgrounds illuminates their current and future choices. This can be important as a signpost to the handling of difficult issues and likely areas of satisfaction and stress respectively. It can be argued that continuing with voluntary work of a significant nature such as governing, requires some extra motivation as, in the absence of a financial incentive, other perceived positive outcomes or benefits become more important. The reason it is vital to understand the processes at work, in all their complexity is to enable an individual to contribute fully and to maintain motivation.

Micro level

Everyone's motivation will be significantly different to each other's as well as having some similarities between them. By using auto/biographical research, interviews flowed direct from the research participants and the way they described their experience of being a governor was self-selected and personal to them. There may also be unconscious motivation and my own auto/biographical chapter demonstrated that not all factors can be neatly accessed immediately. The research showed that at the intersection of the individual and society, the primacy of an individual's psychology cannot be denied and influences from childhood and early family life can exert strong direction and requirements that we may well not be at all aware of at first asking.

Meso level

At the meso level of the school there are issues about prevailing institutional discourses that can inhibit at best and block at worst. When thinking how these can be theorised, the concept of cultural capital is significant as school governing bodies can express latent and overt barriers to entry and an exclusive and alienating environment. This level references the sociology of Bourdieu, specifically his understanding of how institutions (he was focusing on elite universities) maintain the existing social order, and how ownership of cultural and educational capital, or their absence, reinforce divisions between different groups (Bourdieu,1988).

His work encompasses the concept of habitus, which represents a person's lived culture of ideas, actions and ways of being in the world, or how they perceive reality, referenced by Houlst's (2012) exploration of adult learning. Social capital arises from networks of social relationships and influence. Bourdieu's concept of disposition described how people assume what is expected of them in a particular environment. They will pick up clues and cues from a variety of sources including language, types of discourse, and performance and conduct in meetings. These expectations and ways of being are thoroughly internalised and if there is a perceived difference between what is known and what is encountered, they can feel as though they are a *fish out of water*, finding it difficult to thrive at best and dangerously out of control at worst. Houlst criticised the essentially static nature of such a concept because of the lack of room for individual growth and agency in Bourdieu's writing (Houlst, 2012, p. 10). Issues about widening participation both of the recent moves to make boards more business-like and the attitudes and behaviour of the existing governors need attention as if not attended to,

this could increase polarisation and exclude more potential governors. Awareness of these issues can be a step forward to move to take action to facilitate a more representative body.

Macro level

At the macro level the retold experiences of my sample of governors illuminated some of the motivators that they felt related to them. The reasons they first volunteered through to the experiences that they had over the year's course of the research are illustrative of more common thoughts, feelings and conclusions that can explain the costs and benefits of such volunteering to others. These narratives can affect the way that volunteering opportunities are both shaped and presented in and by society.

Implications

At the micro or individual level there is the insight into how people choose to identify and then tell their own stories about their motivation. The drivers and the psychological or personal factors that they describe and see as significant, how they understand the term, the aspects of their experience that have made them more or less motivated can offer lessons about how to link with the motivation of governors to attract more people to volunteer and stay as school governors.

There may be features of the way governorship is presented in public information and the way that the role of a school governor is described in the media that affects the perception of the role to de-motivate instead of attracting new people to the role.

Efforts to promote recruitment need to appeal to people's deeper motivations to make a contribution to society and to inspire future governors (James and Goodall, 2014, p. 38).

At the meso level of an individual governing body within the institution of a school, pointers can contribute to good practice to aid successful partnerships between individual governors and the school which can help to retain governors. As part of their narratives, the research participants described elements of school management and specifically the liaison with the governing body which either encouraged or discouraged them as volunteers. This implies the need for a sophisticated level of governor management which incorporates scope for recognition and respect.

Finally at the macro level this research can be situated in the more sociological and economic debate about community engagement. Governance as a sizable proportion of volunteer effort in the UK is worth exploring both to see what lessons can be learned which may apply to other voluntary endeavours and also how being a school governor can be best presented at a societal level. Putnam (2000) explores the significance of declining community engagement as a key element of modern society in the USA. Certain lessons may be drawn from this research study that could illustrate the link between individual motivation and the wider societal picture.

Further research

What part does school governance play as a sizable provider of volunteering opportunities in the future in the UK? As an area hitherto unexplored in this way, this subject constitutes a fresh and important area for exploratory research. In many areas of England there are shortages of volunteers to become governors. The problem is especially acute in areas of social marginalisation, where schools have proportionately more vacancies which remain unfilled than in more prosperous areas. In particular across the country there are often not enough volunteers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds or from those with disabilities. Their absence is again particularly acute in urban areas with a significant social mix. An appeal to recognition factors could open up motivation identification.

There is an important role to be played in involvement with and the running of key voluntary organisations in the UK today. Accounting for the spending of public money and providing public services needs committed, skilled and keen people to join in with these enterprises. As an example, school governorship is needed in all educational establishments to provide strategic oversight, an understanding of the financial arrangements and to ensure suitable educational standards are being attained. Unlike with the staffing of a school, these governor positions are not paid. There is also a national shortage of school governors. Current estimates suggest that there is a 30,000 shortfall in the numbers required (NGA Website).

From the early personal odyssey to look into the motivation for taking on school governorship through to proposing a research thesis and collecting the narratives of others, this has been a fascinating area to explore. The search for reasons in hitherto unmapped territory has thrown up issues around different types of motivators as well as different levels of satisfaction. Starting from a personal quest to discover the motivation

of other school governors, by the proposal stage, this research was intended to explore and better understand the impulse by the participants to engage in governance as an example of community engagement.

To return to Mills belief that the problems of social structure necessitate examining the intersection of biography and history (see Chapter 1, p. 18) this involved interrogating at two distinct levels, the personal question of identity and the wider role of an individual vis-a-vis society. I was interested in what the significance was of this civic role if any, for the participants in this research and whether civic involvement appeared as one of their motivating interests, that is, if it appeared that a wider motivation existed beyond just a connection with the school. In an era of diminishing political engagement, if the relevance of such activity could be identified and the experiences clearly depicted, it could be a catalyst for others' involvement on a wider scale (Putnam, 2000). The participants' observations could also point to the areas of difficulty and distraction that inhibit others from joining in or that make them drop out of the activity at an early stage. The ideas of Goffman have merit in understanding the role to be adopted as a governor and the potential difficulties that might be encountered.

Although I began by looking at governing bodies as part of the school community, this thesis focused instead on the reverse: it turned around as I was writing to reveal instead more about the role being a governor plays in the life of the individual volunteer. The narratives of my research participants seem to resonate with Honneth's categories of respect. Whilst interesting as identifiers, this could be taken further to enhance satisfaction with community engagement, not just anticipating a rare awarding of an MBE or a certificate from the local council, but as an explicit path of progression and of volunteering seniority and experience. This could be acknowledged and rewarded on a much more regular basis for the involvement, commitment and attainment of the individual. In this sense there is a profound convergence with careers guidance.

Each pair of interviews a year apart with each participant could have filled a thesis on their own, in terms of the wealth of material each person contributed in the telling of their story. There could be value in a research space to tell more individual stories about a life which features volunteering as part of it but focusing more explicitly, and questioning directly, on Honneth's theories of recognition and the role of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. In this way, the theory could be shared with participants for them to describe the place of these feelings in their lives, rather than

them being described and ascribed solely by the researcher, post-interview at the analysis stage.

An elongated longitudinal study would illustrate more of the changing nature of this voluntary role over time. There were two participants, Kay and Alison who had experienced marked differences over the course of the year in this research. A three-year study would show greater differences to illustrate the waxing and waning of this example of community engagement and solidarity through the experiences of the participants.

There also would be benefits to conducting a comparative study across European countries to explore the differences and similarities of this type of school governance across the continent. Working with European colleagues could be a profitable exercise for breaking new ground in terms of voluntary activity and it would help cement new collaborative bonds at a time of the UK leaving the European Union.

Limitations

The limitations of this research revolve around the small number of participants and the format of the presentation of the findings. There can be a confidence in the selection of the participants, as this was through a combination of opportunity, where two people volunteered after hearing about my research, and referral, where two people were suggested to me by the local authority governor clerking service. This clerking service indeed picked “successful” governors to refer me to, but due to the longitudinal element of the research, I found a big change in the circumstances of one participant with respect to her experience as a long-established governor, which satisfied me that I had a good spread of circumstances to research.

There was a choice to be made in how to present the findings, as outlined in the Methodology Chapter 3. In selecting a narrative approach with one chapter afforded to each participant, there was ample space to reflect the key elements of the narrative life story told to me, and this was the reason for such a choice. It did mean a concomitant loss of comparing and contrasting of themes which would have been the other way of representing the outcomes. I felt that would have been a clumsy way of arranging the work, with an awkward listing of how each theme had played out for each participant, with the danger of it becoming repetitive, so the choice made seemed to be the best

alternative but there is inevitably something lost through the opportunity cost with each of these selections.

The importance in the final display of the work was to foreground the individual and his or her life story with regard to what was shared about governing. I wanted to be respectful of the several hours each participant had spent reflecting on this hidden but important example of community engagement. The narratives added the more personal element of readability through the biographic attention paid to each person. It encouraged an identification for the reader with each character, although fully anonymised, that aided impact and highlighted the differences not just in the themes arising but in the way of telling these life stories too, so the integrity of the personal nature of the research was maintained.

Learning

If I were to do this research again I would analyse my research questions more robustly and possibly start further back to avoid making assumptions that each participant would have some definite motivation. I might just ask them to describe their starting point and what kept them involved with governing rather than shoe-horning them into coming up with their 'motivation'. Their answers were possibly a post hoc rationalisation in order to obediently answer the question asked, given that it directed them to a type of answer. Awareness of the power relationship between researcher and participant is important even when interviewing confident articulate people, there is a keenness to make a success of the encounter on both sides and a willingness to oblige by the participants.

A significant challenge which emerged through the research was that of interviewing others with who we have intimate relationships. The difficulty of establishing a clear view of a well-known friend was compounded by the anxiety and fraught nature of separating out material gathered from the research compared to that which was already known. Wiser after this experience, although the research went successfully, I would now include a much more in-depth pre-interview discussion with the participant to think through in advance the possible hurdles that might present themselves. Although this would not avoid any of the problems, it would serve to protect the participant and the author from any resulting awkwardness which could arise around breaching of boundaries between the friendship and the research. Perhaps there is no substitute for experience itself. The nature of in-depth qualitative narrative interviews means that a lot of information is revealed, and even more needs to be unearthed through the analysis

stage in order to come anywhere near to an understanding of personal motivation. With intimate friends, this material was additionally available from the friendship itself, and as such, could not be unknown.

This was not ethnographic research but I was someone involved in the same world that I was researching. As a governor myself it was inevitable that I would know other governors and just in the normal way of discussing one's occupation and pre-occupations, my studies came into the conversations I was having with friends and associates, two of whom keenly offered to be participants of the interview programme. Unless we keep our research to areas that have no connection to our own lived lives, or if we insist on only working with those participants we have never met before, avoiding this kind of dilemma is practically impossible: at best we can be aware and alert to any compromising situations that might arise in the future and in turn inform others of our learning.

Unique contribution

This is the first research that has been done on the stories of governors looking at their experiences in isolation from their effect on the school so the choice of research was a new area. The rich material gathered from my participants revealed issues that contribute to the field of knowledge. My participants all shared their stories about their experiences over a year as a school governor and, more importantly, about their backgrounds, attitudes and expectations. This provided interesting and informative material that can illuminate aspects of the move to become involved with a strand of community engagement. From whatever their different starting points, the three individuals and myself were making their way to join in the running of a community organisation for the purposes of helping it succeed. The insights from the pattern of choices they made, the routes they followed and the recognition they encountered all help us to understand the complexities of such experiences.

There are serious implications for policy and practice at each stage of the journey of community engagement through school governance. At the individual or micro level there is the benefit of involvement with others through volunteering which helps with mental health and well-being and gives a sense of purpose and of being valued. For some, a period of volunteering in a school provides an opportunity to apply strategic skills they have accrued. At the meso level having enough governors is not negotiable,

it is imperative that schools and colleges existing on public funds are properly run and accounted for.

Careers context

The thesis had much to say to those in different disciplines. To researchers it emphasises the rewards that can flow from auto/biographical interviewing in terms of the need to fully explore participants' stories. For career counsellors understanding the depth of motivation for a voluntary role such as being a school governor means that attention can be paid to volunteering options in terms of aims, wants and expectations in the same way that it is for paid work. Volunteering is part of life's career and should be given the same consideration, given that it can provide many opportunities for satisfaction and reward via recognition. Voluntary work can be seen as an 'add-on' to a paid role but in terms of personal engagement and the possibilities for growth of self-esteem and self-respect, advisers could do well to actively help clients navigate such opportunities. In times of fractured careers, with a fast-changing global employment market meaning that jobs can end abruptly, volunteer roles can provide non-monetary gains and satisfaction at times of limited paid opportunities. Coupled with a third age extension of working life well beyond that of previous generations, scrutiny of the benefits and possibilities of volunteering can be as in-depth as that previously shown to paid work. Voluntary work is not suitable for everyone. In this research each participant, although not especially wealthy, could withstand the pressure of working several hours each week for no pay. The boundary issues in play between paid and unpaid, voluntary or remunerated and family and community are becoming increasingly blurred and should all be considered as fertile territory for advisers to raise in discussion with their clients.

Conclusion

Thinking of Honneth's three levels of recognition, schools would seem to need volunteers who have a certain level of confidence in themselves and their abilities in order for them to make the most of the opportunity. It can be hard to gain acceptance from others if one feels insecure and vulnerable and whilst some volunteering activities could be perfect for that case because they provide a lot of support, school governance can be a demanding arena. By definition it involves engagement with a group at an institutional level, and this can be a draining environment in terms of both the energy and the basic self-confidence required to contribute fully. At the meso level, the school

benefits from informed outsiders being involved with the performance of the school. Part of the role of school governor is to support and guide the good work that goes on and also to offer scrutiny of the management of the institution and of the attainment of pupils. Working as part of a team can provide opportunities for an individual to gain feelings of respect but also can be detrimental if the experience is not a good one and if the governors close ranks against an incomer. Kay experienced such a rebuff and the feelings this generated effectively curtailed her work as a governor and she left the governing body as soon as possible as a result, wasting her initial goodwill and skills and leaving a bitter taste.

In addition to these three layers, taken from Honneth's work, there are two further areas of implication for the recruitment of governors and community engagement in particular. Before volunteering starts, Putnam's work suggests that there are various pre-conditions that will encourage the drive to engage with a community. These are a humanistic desire to work with and for other people; an interest in improving a neighbourhood and its resources and being keen to feel included and valued as an individual. At the meso level, the need for publicly funded institutions to have the involvement of a community is important for community safety and harmonious local relationships, and successful involvement of public funds. At the wider level, society benefits from community engagement. Where people feel they are investing in their locality, democracy flourishes and a more inclusive society is formed. Putnam's later work looked at specific examples of this kind of successful community initiative (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003).

Completing a doctorate in itself could be seen as a search for recognition where achievement and acclaim increases self-respect and self-esteem. To conclude it seems appropriate to reference a feminist hero, who sums up the exploratory nature of this kind of writing, Greer (1970) ended the introduction to her seminal work, *The Female Eunuch*, with this epilogue:

This book represents only another contribution to a continuing dialogue between the wondering woman and the world. No questions have been answered but perhaps some have been asked in a more proper way than heretofore (1970, p. 12).

I leave this research endeavour as a more confident auto/biographical qualitative researcher, convinced of the centrality of reflexive practice to my careers counselling

work and of the importance of respect and recognition to individual motivation to engage with societal fora. I now have acquired an awareness of the many more research possibilities which lie ahead, particularly around the connection between recognition, volunteering and career.

APPENDICES

Appendix I. Examples of the author's journal entries.

Saturday
Saturday 10 March 2012.
Have had three intellectual breakthroughs recently all of which have taken my work forward. Number 1 was reading a chapter on Goffman last thing at night and then waking up in the morning to have read "only connect" moment. I realised why it is that I am so interested in all this: "The presentation of self in Everyday life" (Goffman's seminal work) is because it fits exactly with my work over the last 15 years working on individual personal presentation in public speaking 'roles' and interview situations

Wednesday 1st June 2016.
Here we are in June halfway through the year already. If I ever pause in my work as when I was staying here for a week, it gets so difficult to pick it up again. I lose my way, lose the bigger picture, lose my confidence and feel very stuck. It then takes even longer to get back on the horse. Two steps forward, one step back. I have to stop analysing, overthinking and worrying and just plough on with it again. There is such a tight deadline to work to, even full-time that you don't have a proper 1st draft ready to be read, correct and etc then getting it all in order, that I must pick up the pace and not get too worried. I don't believe that I must keep looking to that dim small light at the end of the tunnel - onward!

my collage was an abstraction from my list of words, done first. It was a different meaning. "I am thoughtful and not - the meaning whereas my list had more meaning and was clearer. What I meant to write (falling asleep there) was that this are more distant, overall representation of me. Nothing in the picture had any significance as itself - there were a few recognisable things, but I had only used them because they had lots of nice colours in. This is quite child-like really. You could not grasp my word list at all by looking at my picture. My collage is an impression of my new of myself and is also nice to look at.

Appendix II. Ethical consent form



[MODEL] CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher:

Contact details:

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies: 1 for participant
1 for researcher

Appendix III.

Extract from transcript of research interview with Alison 2012

Um right. Um, I suppose the beginning was um, I'd had my children late in life, um by the standard of my generation, not by the current crop of 30-somethings but I had my children when I was 34, 36 and 39. But that was in the '80s so it was '86, '88 and '91, which at that time was unusual and you were called things like: "elderly primigravida" which was, I don't think gynaecologists or institutions would dare do now, but there we go. Um, before that I'd worked since I graduated, I got married shortly after graduation and I was aware that, you know, I wanted to do something else besides what I graduated in geography and economics and I was doing, working for a consultancy in shipping economics which was oil tankers and the oil market, very um, um er, I won't say intellectual, sort of objective stuff and I was aware that I was really very interested in people, the way people worked but at the time when I was at school, those kind of things were not, the idea of psychology er, were not thought of as being anything that you would study and psychotherapy was a sort of distant thing and I found it very interesting, you know, and then there started to be radio programmes about it and I kind of picked up on it and then I was sort of looking, I was fascinated when we heard about how counsellors would talk to people and how they would probe around and, and tease out their lives and the sort of personalities they were and how it would make them what they were and I found that very interesting. I love stories. I love being able to understand things and put them together: "Ah" and leading to understanding and knowledge, I find that very interesting. And so I looked about and my mother had become interested in being a marriage guidance counsellor but she was, she didn't get in but obviously she was much older and I investigated it and of course they were very interested in me because at that time I was sort of mid to late 20s and in working life which again was quite unusual at the time and when I was at college doing my degree my tutor said: "Never learn ...", this is so funny this thing: "Never learn to type because all you'll ever be is a secretary". Um, and of course, I wish I had now because you know, everything's keyboards but you know nevertheless I have taught myself but, so, and I had deliberately pursued things which I would never have that role um, but you know as I say, I was very aware that it was interesting and it was well paid and it was all the right things and but there was something missing so I, to cut a long story short I eventually I went through the process, didn't get in first time so I volunteered, second time I did get in and then went through a whole process of training and working

with clients, blah de blah de blah and that was, and it did it definitely did fill that gap. So there I was, you know, doing my full time job, and doing this voluntary work, so it's been, part of my, sort of my adult life, voluntary work. Um, but also I think perhaps the example had been set as I say, by my mother who had always been, you know, interested in the community and doing things with the community. Hers took a slightly different route but that, but it was always part of my life, what I thought was normal if you like. So um when, then my husband, we'd just moved house up to where we are still now, [. . .] and, it's fine, we could afford it at the time and we moved in, and a couple of months later he went off on a business, he was always travelling. He went off for a business trip to the States and Canada. While he was there, he was in New York, had breakfast TV on while he was getting ready for his meeting, he saw about a very highly innovative company where they were using data and went to visit them, shopping data, he was in food retailing at the time. And sort of rang up and said: "Hey I'm in town, can I come and meet you and talk about your business?" And they said: "Sure". To cut a long story short they thought he was great and they pursued him when he came back and a year later we ended up moving to New York where we lived for five and a half years. It was the toughest thing I've done because I didn't want to go, you know, I'd got work and I'd got everything just so, [laughs] and I'd been to the States, indeed been to New York, we had friends there. I was was horrified, you know; "The States? They're so loud". You know, I had all the English prejudices about it."

Let alone the upheaval

And the upheaval, nearly killed me. Just making the decision, it was very tough. Made the decision, and I made the decision because I thought, [my husband] really wants to do this and I've reached the point in my career where I know what I need to do to make advances within the company I am but I'm not sure I want to pay that price um and I really want to pursue more the counselling side of things but there's no money in that and we've got this huge mortgage. And so it was kind of by default, but there's this thing in the back of my head said: "I don't want to get to 60, almost the age I am now and look back and think; Oh, I wish I'd done that." So, you know, off we went. It was, I found it really hard to start with because although we so-call speak the same language, we so don't! [Laughs]

"Awesome!"

Yes exactly! Though that wasn't the word at the time, there were other phrases and things but, and of course the biggest thing of all was that I'd made the decision thinking, oh I've made the decision, said my goodbyes or 'au revoirs' and that's it, it will be all right now. Of course it isn't because you've got to do all the adapting and you find it so difficult. I ended up in tears a few times just because I went from being this very competent person absolutely in charge of everything and just completely at sea. You know, we weren't part of an ex-pat community or anything, I had to learn it all while I was there and find, and make a life for myself, which I did. I did do work for my, on consumer, on an ad hoc consultancy basis for my previous company because apart from anything else, some of our clients were there. And that was a very interesting experience but very odd because in those days the most advanced piece of machinery was a telephone answering machine, you know, new. We had very clunky computers but there was none of the stuff we have now and of course the six hours' time difference made it terrible awkward communicating. Today it would be made so much easier to do it but anyway I had to do it and do all my research by phoning people up and all that stuff, but anyway I did a couple of projects for them and I just sort of carved out a life for myself. One of the interesting things to do was being able to travel, when [my husband] was going to interesting places, he did an awful lot of going to very dull places in the mid-west. He was going to the east or west coast or Florida in the middle of winter from New York or from the west coast I would [say]: "Oh yes, I'm coming too". Because the flights were very cheap and the hotels in those days, in the States and not in England, were just by the room so if he was going there anyway, it was very, relatively cheap anyway to go too. And I did some voluntary work and eventually I found I did recording for the blind. Their mid-west base was in New York and I found out I'm very sibilant but they liked having the English accent and I read "Pygmalion" and of course I could do the different bits and bobs especially as it was written in the way, what's the word, oh I hate this getting older when you keep forgetting things, colloq, colloq, what's it called when it's written out how it sounds?

Phonetically

Appendix IV.

Annotated transcript extract from interview with Thomas 2013. The annotations are my initial thoughts on re-reading the transcript, my highlighting picks out what seem to be significant comments.

. . . Mmm

These interjections from me are quiet and meant to encourage him to carry on. Thomas has a slight speech impediment, a hesitation before he starts a sentence which leads to slight regular pauses.

And I'd been in the computer business for many years developing computer systems on mainframes and um, it was quite stressful at times you know, and I thought well, in the end I was working for myself, and I thought well I can cut right down on the workload and sort of go semi-retired and that's what I did so I had the time.

He seems to have found the end of his working life stressful and he wanted to slow work down.

So he spotted you

He spotted me yes

This was flattering to have his talents and abilities sought out by the Head Teacher (Honnet, 2007).

And what about when you first started, you know, you said, as with a lot of us, you walk in thinking, I don't know anything about this, this is a scary business, almost a different language

I want to explore more of the 'Fish out of water feeling' as he carried on despite feeling it (Bourdieu, 1988).

Totally different language

It felt for him impossible to understand what people were talking about.

Yes, had you had any kind of information before you started or did you just have a meeting time to turn up?

Sorry, I'm not clear

Well I'm just interested in, when people first go to a governing body meeting, had anybody talked to you about what it might be like or

No, not at all, it was come along, you know, and I went in and I saw all these people and the chair of governors didn't really make you feel comfortable. Especially I think because in my case, because um, she felt that the Head had recruited me and therefore maybe I would be on his side and so I went in there and I just didn't feel comfortable and she sort of wanted everybody to realise how much power she had, and that sort of thing, it was totally wrong, the whole set-up of the governing body. And so I really had to think whether I wanted to continue [laughs]

He had no induction prior to the meeting and this made him feel like an unwanted outside by all except the Head who had recruited him.

Go back for a second meeting. So what made you, what made you go back?

What did motivate him despite the unfriendly, unsympathetic first meeting?

Well it was a challenge. I felt sorry for the head. He was trying really, really hard to bring the school round, you had the usual bunch of mothers at the school gate complaining about everything and um some of them were on the governing body and you know, it was very, very uncomfortable for him um, and I just thought, well I've got to help him. You know, I've got to try and help him. So I stuck with it.

It was a challenge and he responds to this, as a problem that needs solving, plus the idea of being able to provide help. He stuck to his guns.

And what made you think he was worth defending? Obviously I don't know any of these people but you know, you obviously felt he was good, he was in the right and he was trying to do the right thing for the school. What was it that made you think that?

Well it was the attitude of the teacher governors and the attitude of the chair of governors and the parent governors. The parent governors were trying to tell him how to run the school you know? And um, that's his responsibility OK? And they wanted to interfere in all aspects of the day-to-day running of the school which is just not on you know? And so I, you know, talking to him and hearing what he wanted to do with the school and so on, what he was trying to do, um, you know, it just made me realise that he was on the right side and they were on the wrong side.

There were some things that he perceived that he felt weren't right. He wanted to fight on the side of right. Moral absolutes.

So you went back, and then how did it go from then on, because presumably there was a little bit of a kind of a struggle going on, how did it work out?

Well, I think they realised that I wasn't on their side and they gave me a hard time [laughs]

His laughter almost seems to be saying: 'They weren't going to frighten me!'

In what way and how did that show itself?

In all sorts of ways, they, everything negative that they could say, they said. If they saw me coming out of a pub, it would be: "Oh look, I saw him and he was drunk", you know. I got really involved in the school, well that was later on but you know, they would watch my every action and if they could say something negative about something that I did, they would and they would try and spread it through the whole school.

They tried to make him feel isolated and unwelcome because of the power struggle.

And that must have felt very uncomfortable

It was very uncomfortable, it was very uncomfortable. And I, after a while, I decided that I had to try and change the governing body and um, well that's what I started working on there.

He decided to take matters into his own hands, to alter the balance of power.

OK so what did you do? How did you do that part? What happened? . . .

Appendix V.

Narrative and Auto/Biographical Interview Proforma

The intention behind this proforma is to develop a way of recording key issues about interviews, in relation to a particular person, in a more standardised format (without jeopardising the flexibility of the whole process i.e. more open-ended forms of interviewing and bringing different and diverse interpretations into play, including our differing perceptions of material). And to explore, iteratively, themes, and any interpretative and conceptual issues raised, relevant literatures to consider, and any autobiographical resonance. This would include issues that are not understood and need to be explored further. The point is to be inclusive and to use the document as an evolving text.

The focus is on four main aspects:

- The themes, which seem important, such as transitions and managing changing identities; the interplay of past and present; the interplay of the personal and the professional; role of significant others, transitional space etc etc. This section could include a summary of the themes to be explored further with the participant in the next cycle of interviews.
- The second aspect has to do with the process of the interview and observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power etc as well as the extent to which the process was more one of providing reports rather than stories. It is important to include any autobiographical resonance, and to document any thoughts and feelings as they arise, even from dream material or free associations.
- The third, thinking more ethnographically, is about the circumstances of the interview, including interruptions, and general impressions of the setting and what might have been happening around it.
- The fourth with any sense of a gestalt in the material: might there be an emerging theme around building a career, identity and the management of change and transition. Or around the nature of the story being told. This can be done tentatively, more a play of ideas as a basis for shared reflection

(We seek, in effect, to identify the overall form, or gestalt, of narrative material, drawing on the theoretical work of Fritz Schutze (1992) and the German biographical-interpretative school as well as psychodynamics and phenomenology (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The approach contrasts with conventional code and retrieve methods in computer-assisted qualitative data analysis, or even grounded theory, where data are disaggregated, often prematurely and then reaggregated with data from different cases, bringing the danger of losing the nuance, specificity and potential inter-connectedness of experience and meaning across individual lives).

Please cut and paste relevant (and brief) extracts into the proforma and add any thoughts on content, process, context and 'gestalt'. And weave into the text, any quotations, readings or suggestions from the wider literature.

By West, L. adapted from Merrill, B. & West, L. (2009) *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage.

Appendix VI.

Analysis of interview with Kay

Interview 1

Pen portrait

Kay and I met at National Childbirth Trust (NCT) ante-natal classes in 1997 when we were both having our first child. Kay is a graduate, who used to be an actor, (and occasionally still is in adverts). She now works as a private caterer providing dinners and food for parties for several hundred pounds. She is married to an Administrative Manager. There were five couples at that NCT course and she is the only person with whom I have kept up an active friendship. Kay and I have remained friends for the last 15 years. Her son John who was born the day before my daughter, and in the same hospital, has autism. Life is not at all easy with an autistic son and Kay has always maintained a positive and resolute attitude. I have never heard either or her husband complain about their lot in any way. She is stoical and practical. She often talks to me about John.

When she heard about my research, she volunteered to be a participant in this research project as she had just become a governor at John's state Special School. At the time of this first interview with her she had been a governor for one year. A normal term as governor is four years.

The setting for the encounter was my lounge in my house - a familiar location for Kay. I was the interviewer. I arranged the setting and directed the interview. My lounge needed to be tidied, the seating arranged and the technology checked. We sat at the dining table in the lounge which was more business-like and purposeful than the sofa on which we normally sit to chat when meeting socially. I am used to sitting at the dining table (never used for dining) when I work with visiting careers counselling clients but it was probably the first time Kay had ever sat at the table rather than in an easy chair at my house. It was 8.15 in the evening when the interview began, the house was empty except for the two of us and there were no interruptions.

Themes or content

The expressed point of the research was to find out about the motivation of school governors. I asked Kay to consider what her motivation had been when she first stood

as a governor a year ago up until now. There were five main ideas that Kay identified as part of her motivation to become a governor. First was to do the best for her child, to become more visible as a parent within the school and therefore be able to hold the school more accountable. Many parent governors join both to see more about the way the school runs and to be seen as an interested and 'present' parent. This could be seen as a selfish reason in that it springs from self-interest. It is possibly relevant that John is a quiet boy who would be easy to overlook. He does not have any challenging behaviour and is timid in his manner. Kay as an ex-actor has considerable presence and poise. I remember when I first met Kay and her husband at the first ante-natal class, being rather staggered by their very good manners and politesse.

The second given reason was to help the school and this includes playing a part in raising standards at the school. The third was to encourage more parental involvement in the school. There is not much parental involvement in the school concerned. Special Needs schools have few pupils in total and often parents have more than one child with problems. They are not necessarily involved with the school at all and many of the usual events such as music concerts and summer fairs etc. are more difficult to organise in such an environment. The fourth motivation Kay highlighted was because she was flattered to be asked to stand as a governor. Women in particular are often happier to take on a role if specifically asked to do so. The fifth reason she said was important to her was to participate in voluntary work in the community.

One aspect she raised on the debit side of motivation was about the weight of responsibility for difficult internal decisions and the approbation from staff if those decisions do not please them. She first mentions this on page 26:

There was a committee meeting actually, a parent accused them of discrimination a couple of times actually, which didn't go down terribly well. I don't care really.

I missed picking it up. It arises again on right at the end of the interview which indicates it has importance for her.

Because I'm a parent governor, I'm there afterwards. If somebody's been there working a long time, as this person has, for years and we come to this decision obviously some members of staff will be relieved but then obviously she would have many friends there. I was thinking, they're going to hate me now.

It is an issue I would like to explore more next time we meet. I would like to explore all of these themes in more detail in subsequent interviews and to track their relative significance over time.

Themes and issues that could be discussed further and taken forward include class. I would like to ask Kay how she would describe her social class and if she thinks there is any significance to this with regard to her motivation and engagement with the school.

Another issue is that of our previous friendship and how Kay sees this as either a strength or a weakness and perhaps what influence she thinks it may have on the collection of our interview material.

I am interested to follow-up on the feelings and perceptions Kay has of our first interview to see if she has reflected on the process and on her answers. She did say to me after the first interview that she had been worried that I would find her thoughts “not exciting enough” and she was pleased at being able to re-run it so that she could think of more interesting things to say to me. I reassured her that it was all interesting material for me but I think her feelings of doubt and hesitation could be explored further as they may represent an example of her wanting to please me. Could this be a sign that she feels less powerful than me in this interview? If so this could be matched by my simultaneous worries that she might find talking about governorship very dreary, particularly as she had had to have the same conversation twice.

Overall my feeling that the issue of motivation to take part in any activity through life does relate to issues of identity i.e. the conception and expression of individuality, particularly round social or cultural roles; an area usually associated with social psychology. Putting oneself forward for a social or community role could be seen as a form of the identity commitment outlined by Marcia leading to a sense of achievement. (Marcia: 1993) These drivers may lie below and perhaps underpin those stated reasons such as involvement with helping the school and raising its standards etc.

The script needs to be anonymised and this needs to be thorough as it would be relatively easy to identify the people and the school concerned.

Process

Kay and I knew each other before the interview. As friends we have a relationship of equality, trust and openness, going back 15 years which started with the birth of our

respective children. It is a relationship that has seen various ups and downs: the autism diagnosis; marriage break-up; illness and redundancies which have led to a close and familiar friendship. We see each other every few weeks for a coffee and a chat and have socialised together in other ways over the years e.g. theatre and cinema trips. We tend to have a jovial and light-hearted relationship.

My first reaction to hearing the recording of the interview was that there was frequent laughter from Kay as she talked, more than I would expect from her. It signified to me that she felt slightly ill at ease. This could have been embarrassment due to the unusual formal nature of the encounter; due to her feeling under scrutiny and under the spotlight although as an actor she is used to this but not talking about herself. It is well-known that actors are often unconfident in their own skin. I did not pick this up until after the interview so this is also an issue I can ask her view about at a future meeting. I could elicit her reaction to the recording itself. She has so far only seen the transcript and said she was horrified at how inarticulate the printed word seemed to make her. This is one of the difficulties of sharing a verbatim transcript of course. In speech hesitancy and partial sentences come across as all part of the flow, whereas on paper these make the interchange seem very jumpy and tangled.

We have not had conflicts in our friendship as we are only involved at a social level as family friends so have not tested or articulated the power relations between us. How else could this be judged? We have probably both left each other alone from time to time at various junctures, by being temporarily out of contact with each other but not due to any umbrage taken. I can ask her for her opinion about how she sees our friendship. She uses me as someone to talk to honestly about how she feels about life, family and work issues, particularly when life is difficult or frustrating. I chat about what is happening in my life and sometimes share my frustrations and often pick her brains on more practical issues. She does not put me on a pedestal, we are quite happy to challenge each other if we think the other is wrong and I would say we know each other well.

The fact that she had volunteered to take part in this research makes her an example of an opportunistic candidate. Merrill and West offer Miles and Huberman's definition:

Opportunistic sampling is when researchers take advantage of situations to interview individuals, through luck, chance, the right word being said, or because people offer themselves. (Merrill, B. and West, L. 2009: 107).

Ethnographics

Ethnographics (literally writing about people or the nature of people) refers here to an analysis of the context, setting and circumstances of the interview.

Kay, who lives about half a mile away, had been to my lounge in my house many times before. Normally though we sit on the sofa to chat as friends. This time we sat at the round dining table which felt more business-like. It meant I could put my two recording devices on the table between us and also have a note-pad in case I needed to take written notes of our conversation. We also had our two wine glasses present on the table and kept re-filling them. There are pros and cons to interviewing friends. As a friend who had heard about my research, Kay volunteered to be a participant which was incredibly helpful as she was a recently recruited governor at an inner city state special school who would provide interesting material I was sure, and would be available over time to monitor her changing perceptions about her motivation. The drawback is that there is already an established relationship which can feel awkward to back off from in order to establish a 'new' researcher/research participant interaction. We are both the same age, white, around 50, her parents were both actors, her father fairly well-known in his day.

Gestalt

The overall form or wholeness. One thought that occurs to me with the question of a gestalt in mind is that I need to elicit more of a narrative approach with Kay. The process we went through in this first interview was focused on the direct and presented issue of governorship and so was very business-like but possibly too limited. A deeper understanding may come from a more general exploration. Her thoughts and insights about her background need to be tested out and explored to see if they shed light on the themes she has already identified and any emerging ideas she may have. In that sense I need to loosen up the structure and try less hard to direct the work. Using a theatre analogy, move from a directed and scripted piece to more of an improvisation. I did have a script of sorts as I had produced a mind map prior to the encounter of the rough questions that I planned to ask.

I have thoughts about my transition from interviewer to researcher. As an experienced interviewer, my careers counselling experience over the last twenty-five years has followed more of a narrative bent, asking people about themselves, their lives, their influences etc. This research interview was therefore much more focused and drilled-down than I am used to. Many new researchers feel anxiety and fear about conducting an interview with no boundaries to the subjects that can be covered, whereas for me the opposite is true and I feel that my research interview was a bit clumsy and leaden because of my direction. It might have been better to share designing the questions with Kay during the interview itself perhaps but this could have been counteractive.

The script below gives her answers to my pre-planned questions but does not give enough of a sense of who the person providing the answers is, or her story. Because she was known to me, I did not start by finding out who this person is. If she had been a new contact, I would have needed more background to find out her values and world-view to be able to identify and contextualise her outlook and approach. However, as Andrews et al. state, the challenge of narrative research is to define, locate and unearth the starting and finishing points, the themes and the meaning. (Andrews et al., 2009).

Any other issues

Startled and then inspired by Clough's (2002) fictional representation of his educational research in *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research*, I started to depict this interview as a story.

The essential point is that educational researchers should assemble, within their research craft, an honesty and integrity of language with which to express the moral positions (as well as the methodological justifications) of their enquiry. This must inevitably call for new ways of seeing (Clough, p. 86).

The doorbell rings and the poised blonde stands outside carrying a bottle of wine.

“Here I am!” she announces in a sing-song voice, laughing and holding up a bottle of wine. After dealing with hugs and the coat, they walk into the living room of the house, chatting. The atmosphere is upbeat and both of them are looking forward to the encounter. They like each other and enjoy being in each other's company so the prospect of an evening together, even if focused on the research topic, is a pleasant one. Kay heads straight for the sofa once she enters the lounge until she is directed to sit at the table instead.

“Oh”, she says, slightly surprised, then obediently sits in the more formal arrangement up at the table. This signifies that the evening will be slightly different, more work-like, than normal. This is different.

The wine is poured and the interview begins. Kay refills her glass fairly frequently during the interview whereas Becky makes one glass last for the duration. She feels she needs to be clear-headed and relatively sober in order to carry off this interview. A cat wanders in and out, curiously. It is a re-run of the same event a week before because that interview did not get properly recorded. This gives them both an odd sense of *déjà vu*. Becky suddenly turns uncharacteristically very serious when the recording device is switched on through which Kay understands that this bit has to be done properly.

They both have nerves. One of them is worried that she will not have anything very interesting to say and that the interviewer will be disappointed in her. The other is anxious that the whole interview experience will be tedious for the interviewee. There is a lot of laughter at times. This is not unusual with the two of them but perhaps is a sign of the release of their mutual tension.

The interview veers into more of a conversation for a while – Rebecca finds it difficult to not join in to create a discussion at times when they are talking about shared experiences, especially at one point when Kay asks for guidance about an aspect of being a governor. Rebecca’s job is giving advice and she finds it hard to stop herself from slithering back into that role. She is trying to inhabit the newer role of researcher – listening, not talking and encouraging full engagement from Kay. Rather than one of Alan Bennett’s “Talking Heads” monologues, this becomes more of a duet because sometimes it feels as though a level of engagement would be lost without it.

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